

GEORGIAN ARTISTS TARGETED AMID ESCALATING REPRESSION

Information release, names and info of all artists for this moment under the state violence and other materials collected by Georgian Young Theatre Makers and other colleagues

The illegitimate Georgian government, led by the pro-Russian “Georgian Dream” party, has employed brutal tactics to suppress protests calling for democratic reforms and the country’s integration with the European Union. Over 400 individuals have been detained, many of whom have been subjected to physical violence, humiliation, and torture at the hands of law enforcement and paramilitary groups acting with impunity. Among the victims are celebrated actors, poets, writers, and directors, and other voices of Georgia’s cultural resistance.

In the midst of violent crackdowns by the illegitimate Georgian government against peaceful protesters, numerous artists and cultural figures have become victims of police brutality and political persecution. These attacks underscore the government’s increasingly oppressive response to dissent, targeting not only ordinary citizens but also prominent figures from Georgia’s artistic and cultural community.

- Giorgi Makharadze, an actor, was savagely beaten by a group of 30 masked attackers as police officers stood by, refusing to intervene. His plea for protection was met with silence.
- Andro Chichinadze, another actor, was arrested on fabricated charges of organized crime. His mother, Lika Guntsadze, recounts the traumatic incident, emphasizing the regime’s attempts to silence even non-aggressive voices.
- Giorgi Nakashidze, an actor described the “unimaginable cruelty” he faced after being detained by special forces, who subjected him to severe beatings.
- Natia Bunturi, an actress and ballet dancer, was deceived into isolation by riot police and struck twice in the head, leaving her bloodied and traumatized.
- An actor Irakli Sirbilashvili, A director Avtandil Diasamidze, and an actor Giorgi Bakhutashvili were all arrested and physically assaulted during protests. Despite their injuries, they remain resolute in their fight for justice.
- Poet Zviad Ratiani suffered severe injuries, including broken bones, after being dragged, beaten, and tortured by police. Ratiani’s resistance to signing fabricated statements highlights the inhumane conditions faced by detainees.
- Director and dancer Tata Tavdishvili was shot in the knee with a rubber bullet at close range while protesting peacefully.

- Writer Toresa Mossy, physically assaulted at the Writers' House, remains committed to fighting for democracy through love and education, despite the violence inflicted upon her.

And this is not a full list of artists who have been arrested or forced.

Arrested individuals are subjected to beatings in transport vehicles, detention centers, and even public spaces. Video footage of these attacks only scratches the surface of the widespread human rights violations occurring in Georgia.

The use of fabricated charges, as seen in the case of Andro Chichinadze, and targeted assaults on prominent artists indicate an intentional effort to dismantle Georgia's cultural and intellectual resistance. These actions are part of a broader campaign to intimidate citizens, suppress dissent, and consolidate authoritarian power.

The violence against artists represents an assault on Georgia's soul. Cultural figures have always been at the forefront of the country's fight for freedom, democracy, and justice. Their targeting sends a chilling message: no one is safe from the regime's repression.

The international community must urgently condemn these actions, demand accountability, and stand in solidarity with the people of Georgia. The voices of artists, journalists, and activists are vital in the fight for a democratic and free Georgia, and their safety must be protected at all costs.

Despite the violence, the artistic community remains steadfast in its commitment to resist oppression. Actor Giorgi Bakhtashvili said it best: "The fight continues until victory."

GIORGI MAKHARADZE

Amid the ongoing repressions in the country, actor Giorgi Makharadze was injured. Attached to this file is a video in which actors Giorgi Makharadze and Giorgi Bakhtashvili accuse the police:

"I watched as 30 people beat me with batons. Are you going to let them kill us? Protect us!" Makharadze addresses a police officer who, according to him, observed the violence but failed to intervene.

The government is using numerous methods against its own people. Through law enforcement agencies, it is beating citizens to death on the streets of Tbilisi. Around 400 citizens have been detained. The government does not need a reason to arrest people—they are arresting anyone they can get their hands on. Detainees are subjected to brutal physical

violence. They are beaten in so-called “detention vehicles” and upon arrival at detention centers. Beatings also occur during arrests. Already detained individuals are sprayed in the face with pepper spray. Disturbing videos of torture during arrests have surfaced, but what is seen in these videos is only a small fraction of the reality.

In addition to other means, the government is deploying so-called "titushki" against its own population. These are disguised individuals who move in groups, unexpectedly and mercilessly attacking people. The police have no response to this. For a long time, such criminal gangs hired by the government have been terrorizing the population. After beating people, they quickly flee the scene, and when citizens call the police, the police do not respond, as these criminal groups are in collusion with the police.

In the video featuring Giorgi Makharadze and Giorgi Bakhutashvili accusing the police of inaction, it is noteworthy that calling the police was unnecessary because the police were already there, watching as masked individuals dressed in black beat the actor. Yet, the police took no action.

ANDRO CHICHINADZE

One of the victims of the ongoing repression in Georgia is actor Andro Chichinadze. He is among those unjustly targeted by the pro-Russian government, accused without evidence and charged with fabricated allegations of organized crime, alongside individuals he met for the first time during the court hearing. The judiciary, controlled by oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, has detained Andro Chichinadze, along with others—more accurately described as hostages. This is a lawless fight against the country's own citizens.

Andro Chichinadze's Mother, Lika Guntsadze:

"I am deeply distressed. I want to sincerely thank you for your support. We live in a time when we must all stand together. I left Andro at home. He was working on a project on his computer. I was supposed to go out for an hour. I told him, *'I'll be back in an hour,'* and he replied, *'Yes, yes, I'll be home.'* I went about my errands, and when I came out, I noticed many missed calls from various people on my phone. I was surprised. By the time I reached home, someone called and told me directly that Andro had been arrested. I ran back as fast as I could.

When I got to the yard, there were about sixty police officers—it was completely dark, with cameras everywhere. Andro hadn't been brought out yet. I panicked. I ran into what felt like a cordon, yelling, hoping neighbors might look out and help somehow. I don't know.

Then they brought Andro out in handcuffs. The last thing he said to me was, *'Mom, don't worry.'* Three police officers then took me inside the building entrance, saying they would explain why he was being detained. But after they brought me inside, they left through another exit without explaining anything.

When I got back home, my husband told me what had happened. A girl had rung the doorbell. Andro opened the door, and several officers were already outside. Five or six of them entered the house, while many more were outside. They were not aggressive. On the contrary, they sat down and talked to him, asking things like, '*What movies have you acted in? What plays are you performing in?*' Then they accused him of being part of '*some organized activity.*' It's utterly absurd! What organized crime? What kind of attacker is Andro, who has so many responsibilities?

Yes, he attends protests! Yes, I attend protests too! My whole family does! We fight against injustice. And even if Andro didn't want to attend protests, I would tell him to go. You can't leave such work for others to do.

When I came home, my husband recounted how they entered. They didn't leave any documents, no investigator's name, no contact information—nothing. The only thing they mentioned was the address where they were taking him.

There's another detail: they stayed in the house for a long time. A lot of people were gathered outside, and as we later realized, they were waiting for the *Imedi TV* crew. They delayed the process so that *Imedi* could film Andro's arrest. The TV crew was late, which is why the whole process dragged on.

Andro has never been in trouble before—not even a single fine. He's not an aggressive person. As a mother, I can vouch for that. Honestly, I expected something like this to happen, given the times we're living in—where they now storm into our homes. I expected it more for myself because I write posts and am more active than Andro. I'm not afraid. I expected it for myself, not for Andro, because he is not an aggressive person. I'm the more aggressive one.

Tonight, I'm angry that I couldn't pay attention to what was happening on Rustaveli Avenue. I couldn't sympathize with the people being detained, dragged, and beaten because I was entirely focused on my son. I feel a bit ashamed.

I know he is staying strong. He hasn't been beaten, and tomorrow the lawyers will inform us about what's next. I wish peace, freedom from prison, and recovery to everyone. I hope to see my son soon.

Thank you all for your tremendous support."

GIORGI NAKASHIDZE

December 5, 2024

Actor Giorgi Nakashidze is another victim of the "Russian Dream" repressions in Georgia. "They treated me as if I weren't human," says the actor. In this post, he speaks about the horrifying violence carried out by the special forces. Below is Giorgi Nakashidze's post, presented in its original form:

"I am home now. I went to the front perimeter to help my friend's child. They detained me along with three other people. They forced us into a vehicle and physically assaulted us. Later, they handed us over to the patrol officers, who treated us well, unlike the special forces.

Both I and the others who were brought there were subjected to unimaginable cruelty! What they're doing to people is hell!

Thank you so much to everyone who cares and feels compassion! I love you all, regardless of your differing opinions!

Glory to our long-suffering Georgia!"

NATIA BUNTURI

November 30, 2024

Bidzina Ivanishvili and his servants' bloody regime are ruthlessly attacking representatives of the arts, including women. Special forces physically assaulted actress Natia Bunturi. Below is her account, presented without any changes:

"Friends, I'm going to describe in more detail what happened to me yesterday. Apologies for not writing about it sooner. First of all, I ask everyone to keep in mind that you should never go to a protest alone, never separate from others, and never stay in places where you are being pushed toward.

During the commotion, when I tripped and people ran away, I think three riot police officers picked me up, saying, 'Come on, come on, we'll take you out of here.' I naively thought that something terrible was happening behind me and that they were trying to protect me, but I couldn't escape even if I had the chance, because I was scared to be with them.

As they helped me up, I asked several times not to hit me, please. They took me to a side street, where only their people were stationed, and we stood by a building's wall. They asked me where my car was, where my friends were, and told me to go home. While I was answering the one standing in front of me, I never suspected they had bad intentions. But then, out of nowhere, I was struck twice on the right side of my head during a pause in our conversation.

Blood immediately poured from my nose, my tongue went numb, and I couldn't speak or do anything. That's when I realized what had happened. One of them quickly took me away and escorted me back to my friends.

I know this is a relatively minor incident compared to what others have faced, but the fact that they lifted me up, took me away, and then hit me in the head – I can't even express how I feel about it. I'm just thankful I ended up there alone, without the guys who would probably be in jail right now. Please, don't go alone and be careful. Everything will be okay soon, and this hell will end!"

IRAKLI SIRBILASHVILI

Actor Irakli Sirbilashvili was physically assaulted and arrested during a protest. The video shows footage of the actor's arrest.

GIORGI BAKHUTASHVILI

Actor Giorgi Bakhutashvili is another victim of the repressions, who was arrested during a protest on November 30, 2024. After his release, he posted the following on social media:

"Hello everyone, a huge thank you to everyone for your attention. I'm back, much more rested and angrier. The fight continues until victory."

AVTANDIL DIASAMIDZE

December 4, 2024

Actor Avtandil Diasamidze was also arrested and physically assaulted during the protest. Here is his post in its original form:

"People, thank you so much for your attention. I'm out and healthy! I'm a little bruised, but I saw people in the station and at the court who were beaten much worse, so I can say that nothing serious happened to me. Thank you so much for your attention. I love you all! And together we will win!"

ZVIAD RATIANI

Poet Zviad Ratiani was arrested on the night of November 28-29 on Chichinadze Street. The news of his arrest was released on November 29, and soon a video appeared on Facebook showing how a group of special forces on Chichinadze Street dragged a man in an orange jacket and beat him down a corridor. The footage shows how the man falls and disappears among the black-masked officers, then reappears, struggling to stay above the surface. The beating continues for several minutes. Zviad Ratiani was recognized by his family and friends as the man in the orange jacket.

Zviad has a broken fifth vertebra, a broken nose and ribs, and various degrees of bruising and contusions on his head and body.

He himself told us what happened on Chichinadze Street, where he was protesting with his friends against the decision of the "Georgian Dream" party not to put the issue of opening negotiations on Georgia's membership in the European Union on the agenda until the end of 2028.

The dispersal of the protesters had not yet started. There was just a small scuffle when Zviad Ratiani protected the protesters with his hands.

"I was just standing there, not shouting, I only made this gesture, I covered them with my hands," he said. At that moment, the police dragged him into their ranks and, without stopping, beat him all the way to the end of the street. Later, as Zviad tells us, they continued dragging and beating him toward the car.

"Once the camera lenses couldn't reach me, the police were beating me mercilessly. They threw me in the car and took me to the Kakheti Highway, where they temporarily stopped. They didn't stop there—they kept insulting and beating me," he recalls.

Zviad Ratiani was alone in the car with the police officers. One of them, sitting in front, hit him deliberately in the head and body with his fists. Zviad's hands were tied, so he could only turn toward his seat in an attempt to avoid the blows to his face.

"Mostly, they were insulting me and telling me that they would break me, saying, 'We're dragging you now and we'll see how you crack.' But they couldn't break me."

At the temporary stop, another beaten man was brought to him. The dispersal of the protest had not yet started, and they were among the first ones arrested that day.

"They brought in a very beaten-up guy and made him sign that he fell down the stairs. Then they turned to me and said, 'See how good guys behave, you should do the same.' I responded as needed. After this, normal patrol officers transferred me to the Zahesi temporary detention facility. There the beating stopped," Zviad Ratiani tells us.

TORESA MOSSY

The writer Toresa Mossy was physically assaulted at the Writers' House. We are attaching the footage of the physical altercation and her post in its original form:

"Thank you to everyone for your condolences and kind words. I am fine; I feel calm and strong, and hatred does not touch my heart. I do not intend to discuss this incident, and of course, I have no intention of going to the police because of it. I know exactly what I am fighting for, and I am certain that none of my public actions are driven by hatred or personal gain. I was raised within the church, and I deeply believe that the word of the Lord and love will guide every person toward the light of truth. My only mission on this earth is to call people toward love and education. I will continue our common struggle, which I believe will end in victory for the Georgian people. Stand firm and strong, and do not let hatred into your hearts.

I understand the interest, which is why journalists are calling me, but I will not say anything more on this issue. The public has seen everything, and there is nothing more to discuss here. If anyone worries about my desire for revenge, they can rest easy, because my philosophy calls for encouraging people toward love, not revenge. Together with you, I will continue the principled and uncompromising fight for this country's European future and democracy, even if it costs me my life."

BEKA KORSHIA, *Translator and Journalist*

Journalist and TV presenter Beka Korshia, who was arrested during the dispersal of the protest on Rustaveli Avenue, was transferred to the Zahesi temporary detention facility by law enforcement officers early in the morning. The information was shared by the TV channel "Mtavari Arkhi."

According to their reports, Beka Korshia was arrested administratively. The TV station states that Beka Korshia was detained while he was helping someone else. There are also reports that Beka Korshia was physically assaulted during his detention.

DATHA KHARAISHVILI, *Translator*

Translator Datha Kharashvili was arrested during the protest. Here is his post, unchanged:

"Hello friends, a huge thank you to everyone - to friends, acquaintances, and strangers. I don't even know how to thank you for this incredible support. I was discharged from the hospital, and I feel great. If I had been afraid of arrest and beating, I wouldn't have been there. I will write more about the rest later."

TATA TAVDISHVILI

During the protest, director, actress, and lecturer Tata Tavdishvili was injured. She was shot in the knee with a rubber bullet. We are attaching a photo confirming the injury. Here is Tata Tavdishvili's post:

"Dear supporters and those condemning both-sided violence, watch, enjoy, worry a little, and try to guess what I must have done for them to use a rubber bullet at close range to stop me. This is a one-week-old story, and while my personal loss cannot overshadow the current brutality, perhaps you will still get a sense of objectivity, even if it is biased."