

Irakli Kobakhidze
Prime Minister of Georgia
7 Ingorokva Street
State Chancellery
Tbilisi, Georgia

Dear Prime Minister Kobakhidze,

We, the undersigned international press freedom, journalists and human rights organizations, are writing to express our deep alarm about the reintroduction of the bill on Transparency of Foreign Influence and the sudden rise in violence and other restrictions against Georgia's journalists reporting on the public protests against the Bill.

We reiterate our [call](#) for the immediate withdrawal of the Bill which threatens the viability of many independent media and we call on the authorities to guarantee the safety of all journalists after at least 20 [media workers](#) were physically assaulted, verbally harassed, or detained while covering demonstrations.

The Transparency of Foreign Influence bill, which was recently [passed](#) in its second reading at the Parliament, provides the authorities with a powerful tool to discredit, pressure, and eventually silence independent voices, thereby threatening press freedom and freedom of expression.

The law would not only force independent media and NGOs to be labelled as "organizations pursuing the interests of foreign powers," it would also empower the Ministry of Justice to conduct "thorough investigations" of these organizations solely on the basis of a written application alleging ties to a "foreign power."

The Ministry of Justice would have the power to request personal information enabling it to interfere in the activities of independent media outlets and NGOs, disrupt their operations, and undermine their watchdog role.

Georgia's current legal framework provides safeguards that uphold freedom of the press, including Article 17 of the Constitution of Georgia, which guarantees the inadmissibility of censorship, freedom of the media, and pluralism of the media. Additionally, Article 3 of the

Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression guarantees journalists' right to protect the confidentiality of sources of information, and to make editorial decisions in accordance with their own conscience.

These important legal protections will be undermined by the new Bill by enabling direct government interference and pressure to be applied to newsrooms.

Lastly, journalists should be able to carry out their work freely. The decision to [bar journalists from online outlets](#) from the Parliament, which was made at the very start of parliamentary debates on the Bill, is a clear restriction of the freedom of the media and should be immediately overturned. Furthermore, journalists are unable to carry out their work safely due to police violence and intimidation on the streets of Tbilisi which should immediately end. According to Article 154 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, unlawful interference with a journalist's professional activities is strictly punishable especially when committed using threats of violence or abusing an official position.

Based on our data, at least 20 [media workers](#) have been physically assaulted, verbally harassed, or detained while covering demonstrations, and we call on you to ensure the incidents are fully investigated and the perpetrators are held accountable.

Sincerely,

International Press Institute (IPI)
Index on Censorship
International Media Support (IMS)
European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)
European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
Free Press Unlimited (FPU)
OBC Transeuropa (OBCT)
South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)
Association of European Journalists (AEJ Belgium)
Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project
Association of European Journalists (AJE France)
IFEX
Committee to Protect Journalists
Public Media Alliance (PMA)
Society of Journalists (Warsaw)

Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE)
Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)