



სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების ორგანიზაციების განცხადება

მოვუწოდებთ სპეციალურ საგამოძიებო  
სამსახურს, **გაასაჯაროოს აქციების  
დარბევასთან დაკავშირებულ საქმეებზე  
გამოძიების შესახებ ინფორმაცია**

**Civil Society Organizations urge the  
Special Investigation Service  
to disclose information regarding the**

# investigations into cases of violence during the dispersals of the protests

Civil society organizations call on the Special Investigation Service to make public the information about the investigation into the cases related to the crackdown on the rallies.

As known to the public, during the protests against the Russian law in April-May 2024, numerous incidents of ill-treatment by law enforcement officers were reported. These included both physical and verbal retaliation against protest participants. Law enforcement officers were observed beating individuals present at the rally, including women, children, journalists, and opposition politicians, with arrests being carried out in an especially aggressive manner. The ill-treatment during detention was also documented. **It is noteworthy that, in most cases, the use of force by the police appeared retaliatory rather than aimed at preventing unlawful resistance or violations of the law.** In some instances, the severity of the excessive force used by law enforcement led to serious injuries, requiring some detainees to seek medical treatment and undergo emergency surgery. According to the Public Defender, more than half of the citizens arrested at the rally (over 200 people) reported ill-treatment by law enforcement officers. This is further corroborated by information from civil society organizations, where most of the 190 individuals visited by network lawyers claimed they had been subjected to beatings, often amounting to degrading and inhumane treatment (**for details, see the GYLA report: [Georgia: Human Rights Amidst the Russian Law Human Rights 60 Days Following the Revival of the Foreign Influence Transparency Bill](#) 2024**).

Both, civil society organizations and the Public Defender of Georgia<sup>1</sup> urged the Special Investigation Service to conduct an effective investigation into the aforementioned incidents of ill-treatment during the protests. **However, as of October 9, 2024, neither the Special Investigation Service nor the Prosecutor's Office has reported the identification or accusation of any potential perpetrators involved in these crimes. Additionally, there is no information available regarding whether the authority of any law enforcement officers was suspended during the course of the investigation.**

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We would like to remind the public that, according to the legislation, the Special Investigation Service is an independent investigative body tasked with the effective, timely, and impartial investigation of violent crimes committed by officials, including cases of ill-treatment.<sup>2</sup> **However, based on publicly available information, the investigations carried out by the service regarding the criminal cases related to the events of March 7-9, 2023, and April-May 2024, can be described as merely formal and lacking in substantive results. Furthermore, the service has shown a lack of accountability to the public, failing to provide accurate updates on the progress of these investigations. Despite significant public interest, this proactive agency has not issued any statement regarding the outcomes of its investigations since June.**

**The signatory organizations believe that the ineffectiveness of the investigation into human rights violations during the April-May 2024 rally dispersals by the Special Investigation Service is directly linked to concerns about the security of the upcoming election day.** According to international and constitutional human rights standards, elections must be conducted in an atmosphere free from fear, with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>3</sup> All individuals involved in the electoral process [REDACTED] election staff, and voters [REDACTED] have the assurance that their participation will not subject them to threats or intimidation.<sup>4</sup>

In this regard, **it is important to note** the newly issued decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs concerning the 2024 parliamentary elections,<sup>5</sup> which mandates the creation of territorial groups responsible for detecting and preventing violations of the law. **According to the order, employees involved in this process will include personnel from agencies tasked with carrying out riot control operations during the dispersals of the rallies. It is crucial that these individuals should not themselves be violators of the law. Of particular concern** is the participation of Zviad Kharazishvili (known as "Khareba"), who has been sanctioned for human rights violations, in the recruitment of these territorial groups. In May, the GYLA (Georgian Young Lawyers Association) [publicly addressed](#) the troubling conduct of Kharazishvili, the director of the Special Tasks Department, who confirmed to journalists that the special forces were involved in beating citizens and that there was a pre-prepared list for these actions. He made disturbing comments, saying, "I don't beat young people, I beat non-men. We have a list ...," which are indicative of a

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violent mindset. It is alarming that a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, holding a crucial role in policing, has made public threats advocating violent practices. Such statements inevitably encourage violence within law enforcement agencies. **As early as May 28, 2024, GYLA called on the Special Investigation Service to effectively respond to these incidents of violence by law enforcement officers. This includes ensuring proper legal qualification of such acts and conducting appropriate investigative actions, including interviewing Kharazishvili in response to his threats. An effective investigation is crucial to prevent the normalization of violence in the policing structure and to uphold accountability during the election period.**

**It is also noteworthy that**, under the pretext of public order protection, the Decree grants the groups responsible for the prevention and response to law violations extensive powers. **In the past, the malicious practice<sup>6</sup> of illegal arrests of peaceful demonstrators by law enforcement officers, justified by public order protection, along with ineffective investigations<sup>7</sup> by the Special Investigation Service and the Prosecutor's Office, raises concerns that these territorial units may once again serve as a mechanism for neutralizing individuals undesirable to the Government.**

**We call on the Special Investigation Service to:**

- Provide the public with detailed information regarding the investigation into the crimes committed by law enforcement officials during the protests against the Russian law in April-May 2024.
- Inform the public whether high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including the head of the Special Tasks Department and his deputy, have been interviewed as part of the ongoing investigation.

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## Signatories

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

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Social Justice Center

Partnership for Human Rights

Rights Georgia

Transparency International Georgia

Georgian Democracy Initiative

Democracy Research Institute