

EPDE calls for strong EU response to crackdown on election observers ahead of Georgia's Local Elections

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On 27 August 2025, the Georgian Prosecutor's Office froze the bank accounts of seven independent NGOs including EPDE member [International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy](#), marking a dangerous escalation in the government's systematic dismantling of civil society.

This attack on fundamental rights demands an immediate, forceful, and public European response.

The asset freeze goes far beyond judicial harassment. Organizations such as ISFED have long promoted election integrity and defended citizens' rights in Georgia. The objective of the Georgian authorities is clear: to remove independent voices that hold those in power accountable, especially in light of the upcoming local elections scheduled for 4 October 2025.

The attempt to silence these groups strikes at the heart of fundamental freedoms, including the right to free association and peaceful assembly as protected by Article 11 of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) and guaranteed under Article 21+22 of [Georgia's Constitution](#).

Democratic Backsliding and Repression

This crackdown on civil society follows years of democratic deterioration that culminated in the [flawed October 2024 parliamentary election](#). The Georgian Dream party's subsequent suspension of EU integration until 2028, contrasting with Georgia's constitutional mandate, has triggered massive peaceful protests which were met with water cannons, tear gas, brutal beatings, and torture by masked thugs and law-enforcement.

These patterns echo those seen in Russia and other authoritarian states, where silencing NGOs is a precursor to consolidating autocratic control.

ISFED Continues Despite Repression

The Venice Commission [warned](#) in December 2024 that election observers, recognized as human rights defenders, face growing risks of discrimination, repression, and violence, and called for stronger protection of observers at national and international level.

ISFED has been a particular target. Its monitors were expelled and harassed during the 2024 elections. In April 2025, the Central Election Commission imposed [restrictive rules](#) that limit their rights inside polling stations. In June 2025, a court order from Georgia's Anti-Corruption Bureau [demanded the disclosure of virtually all information of ISFED's](#) activities, finances, and even beneficiaries' personal data, widely condemned as unconstitutional.

Smear campaigns by ruling party officials and pro-government media have sought to discredit ISFED as biased or foreign-controlled, endangering its staff and eroding public trust. **Despite this repression, ISFED has declared it will continue their work.**

EU must shift from a concerned spectator to a lead actor

For over a decade, the Georgian people have demonstrated their commitment to democracy and European integration. Europe must match their courage with decisive action. The EU's response will signal whether European values represent genuine commitments when tested.

If the EU fails to defend Georgian civil society now, it signals to other authoritarian forces that democratic backsliding in Europe carries no serious consequences.

We reiterate our call on EU leaders and EU national governments to:

- **Demand from the Georgian Dream government new, free, and fair parliamentary elections** conducted under international supervision.
- **Publicly condemn the unconstitutional and repressive measures** taken by the Georgian Dream government against civil society and its people.
- **Implement targeted sanctions** against officials responsible for electoral fraud, violent crackdowns, and the systematic repression of civil society, including asset freezes and travel bans.
- **Provide emergency financial support to Georgian civil society organizations and independent media** to maintain their operations despite government harassment.
- **Suspend all non-humanitarian cooperation with Georgian government institutions** while maintaining support for Georgian citizens through direct channels.
- **Deploy high-level diplomatic missions to Georgia**, including visits by European Parliament members and national parliamentary delegations, to demonstrate strong support for Georgian civil society and democratic forces. These visits should involve engagements with opposition parties, civil society organizations, and independent media.

Further reading:

- ▶ *Despite Asset Freezes and Repressions, Georgian NGOs Will Continue Our Work*, [Statement by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy \(ISFED\)](#)
- ▶ *GNDEM Condemns Continued Efforts by the Georgian Government to Close Civic Space and Undermine Citizen Observers*, [Statement by the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors \(GNDEM\)](#)