



## Statement of the Group of Independent Lawyers

**At least 22 facts regarding corruption in the court system have come to light, providing the grounds for initiating an investigation or examining the integrity of judges**

On April 5, 2023, the US State Department [imposed](#) visa restrictions on three current and one former judge due to their involvement in substantial corrupt practices and abuse of office. Simultaneously, as part of the nine-step recommendations aimed at the European integration of Georgia, the European Union supported the [introduction](#) of an extraordinary mechanism for assessing the integrity check of justices who hold the lead positions in the court.

Nevertheless, the current government of Georgia frequently asserts that there is no reason to question the integrity check of judges and that they have not committed any corruption-related offenses. Moreover, in April 2023, the Georgian Dream [hindered](#) the process of setting up a parliamentary investigative commission to study corruption in the judicial system.

It is apparent that the ruling authorities are unwilling to investigate the indications of corruption in the court and examine the integrity of the judiciary, not because there are no valid reasons for the above but rather because they encourage and nurture corruption and clan dominance in the legal system.

Based only on information disseminated through the media and the cases that journalists have looked into, at least 22 cases show signs of corrupt deals or other violations of the

legislation. Ten of the twenty-two instances that are described below have witnesses who publicly spoke concerning the facts of law violations within the judicial system. Among the violations of the law are as follows: influencing judges in their decision-making process and the indications of unsubstantiated enrichment of the judiciary. A particular group of judges holding prominent positions features in each case.

Each piece of information below contains the obvious signs of administrative offenses and the grounds for initiating criminal investigations and examining the judge's suitability for office.

1. According to the [statement](#) made by Besarion Alavidze, a former judge, on May 28, 2024, he received a message from one of the chairpersons of the Supreme Court, threatening “to beat his brain off” if he failed to deliver rulings that were required by the Georgian Dream. Moreover, the former judge’s statement unequivocally demonstrates that in another instance, he was offered to make a pre-agreed decision and, in return, was promised that the attitude towards him would change. Furthermore, Besarion Alavidze recalls that during his tenure as a judge, the clan threatened him, saying that if he talked to journalists publicly about the issues in the court, "he would get into trouble, be smashed, and those people wouldn’t fend off or feel any remorse."
2. The September 17, 2022, [interview](#) with Judge Besarion Alavidze clearly shows that he has repeatedly become the target of clan pressure to force him to deliver specific rulings. This has been further confirmed by the following [statement](#) from Soso Gogashvili, the former deputy head of the State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG): "I hereby confirm the fact of pressure described by Besarion Alavidze in his interview. We, the SSSG, carried out the aforementioned task as per Mikheil Chinchaladze's instruction.” Soso Gogashvili claims that the SSSG was tasked with exerting influence over Alavidze's decision-making process, to which end they had to promise him permanent employment, a financial bonus, and inviolability. This ought to have been accomplished by appealing to state interests, and if he dared to reject them, then he would be menaced with problems. The judge declared that there were frequent instances of case settlements

in the court according to "gangster" rules, the summoning of judges to offices in the courthouse, and demanding specific decisions with regard to specific cases. Ekaterine Gasitashvili, the Supreme Court judge, also [confirms](#) the fact that Besarion Alavidze was under pressure.

3. In 2022, Soso Gogashvili, the former deputy head of the SSSG, made the following [statement](#): "At Chinchaladze's instruction, coordination was established with the SSSG, in which Murusidze and I were the major contact persons in resolving disputes in favor of the "Dream." According to Gogashvili's claims, if needed, operative files about certain justices would be sent to Chinchaladze and Murusidze from the State Security Service of Georgia. Gogashvili asserts that the clan's interest went beyond merely electoral disputes, so the agency had to carry out any task given by the party.
4. According to Soso Gogashvili's [statement](#), Mikheil Chinchaladze and Levan Murusidze have in their ownership a land parcel of up to 100 hectares in the Dedoplistskaro region, which they acquired with his assistance in 2016. The land plots are registered in their trusted person's name, while the maintenance of the property is entrusted to Aleksandre Samkharadze, a member of Gogashvili's security team. Annually, GEL 150,000-200,000 from the income was transferred to Levan Murusidze personally. This fact has been [confirmed](#) by Aleksandre Samkharadze as well. A journalistic [investigation](#) revealed that Tamta Mikanadze, a close associate of Levan Murusidze, and her family are the rightful owners of the aforementioned land plot. Furthermore, the purchase of a 120-square-meter apartment in Saburtalo by Tamta Mikanadze can become another subject for investigation because her family is said [not to have had](#) appropriate funds to acquire the property.
5. In 2022, Archbishop Anton Bulukhia sought assistance from Levan Murusidze and Mikheil Chinchaladze regarding a dispute concerning company shares with his business partner in the "Alia" LLC court [case](#). Archbishop Anton requested that Murusidze and Chinchaladze review the dispute and reach a conclusion in an accelerated manner. In a conversation with Metropolitan Grigol Berbicashvili of Poti and Khobi, the Archbishop

confirmed the fact of meeting up with Murusidze.

6. Tamaz Jaliashvili, a former judge, claimed in an [interview](#) before the High Council of Justice that Levan Tevzadze, the chairperson of the Kutaisi City Court, had attempted many times to interfere in his judicial activities, which resulted in several confrontations between them.
7. In a [statement](#) released on July 27, 2022, Natia Kutateladze describes the case where a judge was excluded from hearing cases concerning electoral disputes using a manipulative case allocation system. She claims to have voiced a dissenting opinion on one of the electoral disputes and to have expressed a critical attitude against unauthorized persons interfering with case deliberations. It is this fact that Natia Kutateladze links her recusal from the panel composition of subsequent electoral disputes and later on the rejection of her lifetime reappointment to the position of a judge. According to Natia Kutateladze, “Because of the clan’s decision, I was not appointed as a judge despite having a ten-year-long judicial track record. Each and every judge is aware that if the clan does not think well of you, the High Council of Justice will not cast their vote in your favor.”
8. In a [statement](#) made by Mamuka Akhvlediani, the chairperson of the Tbilisi City Court, on March 31, 2019, we read that court rulings were agreed preliminarily with the court chairpersons. He claims that, upon his arrival at the court, in 2012, he was given a list indicating which judge was to announce which verdict in the ensuing weeks.
9. Eka Beselia, the former head of the Legal Affairs Committee, notes in her [statement](#) dated March 18, 2019, that after being elected as a parliament member, Vano Zardiashvili, the majority MP, offered to keep a record of the cases he would settle for specific parties. Eka Beselia's statement makes it clear that the record allegedly meant “settled” cases within the court.
10. On June 20, 2019, the High Council of Justice held a vote to elect candidates for the Supreme Court. The voting raised doubts whether the ten members of the Council of Justice were assessing judicial candidates using a pre-determined plan with the view of

choosing candidates preferred by the clan, thus circumventing the established criteria. As a result of the voting, fifty applicants for the Supreme Court were shortlisted and advanced to the next stage. The procedure [was monitored by the Public Defender](#), who found some discrepancies relating to the voting process. In particular, according to the law, members of the Council shall assess candidates on the basis of their integrity and competence. However, the law did not mandate that Council members had to provide an explanation for their decisions, nor did it allow the right to challenge such decisions. Thirteen members of the High Council of Justice participated in the secret ballot held on June 20. Each member had one ballot paper and 20 votes. The observation revealed that 10 out of 13 ballot papers were ticked through a similar scheme, carrying a high degree of coincidence. Namely, the table published by the Office of the Ombudsman [reads](#) as follows:

- 20 of the same candidates were selected on 4 out of 137 ballot papers.
- 20 of the same candidates were selected on another 3 out of 137 ballot papers.
- 15 candidates were selected on the 3 ballot papers mentioned earlier, and 5 candidates were selected on 2 different ballot papers.
- 15 candidates were selected on the 4 ballot papers mentioned earlier, and 5 candidates were selected on 1 of the 2 different ballot papers mentioned before.

11. Former Batumi City Court Judge Irakli Shavadze, in his [statement](#) dated February 24, 2018, recalls how the court chairperson, in an attempt to influence him, remarked, "We are one team here; you either will be with us or be left alone and isolated." The chairperson demanded that he make decisions as per his orders. Irakli Shavadze claimed that he encountered obstacles in the implementation of justice. In one of the instances, Davit Mamiseishvili himself sentenced defendant Zaza Artmeladze to prison. Later, when the case was transferred to Irakli Shavadze, Davit Mamiseishvili said to him that although he had been considering modifying the preventive measure – detention – during the pre-trial hearing, he eventually decided against it because the defendant's

lawyer and sister had put up posters disparaging him during the judges' conference. For this reason, he wanted Irakli Shavadze not to reverse the accused person's imprisonment and keep the most severe restraining measure in force.

12. In 2016, the qualification tests for judges were leaked. In so-called "test leakage" case, Mamuka Akhvlediani, the previous chairperson of the Tbilisi City Court, stated that one of the candidates had become aware of the test paper answers in advance. [He claimed](#) that there may have been several more contestants and that this did not concern only one candidate. In this connection, Levan Murusidze, a judge of the Appellate Court, provided the following explanation: "There was no need for such confidential information to be made public. There might be corruptive offenses that won't be kept secret. I may have more information than what Mamuka Akhvlediani has just heard of."
13. In the "test leakage" case, Nino Gvenetadze, the chairperson of the Supreme Court, may have become blackmailed. As per a [statement](#) made by Nazi Janezashvili, a non-judge member of the High Council of Justice, in August 2018, Nino Gvenetadze, the chairperson of the Supreme Court and the High Council of Justice, was confronted and radically opposed by the "clan" of Mikheil Chinchaladze, the chairman of the Court of Appeals. At one of the sittings, the confrontation took the form of her bullying as well. Furthermore, a [TV report](#) aired on April 29, 2023, concerns Tika Bezhashvili, the manager of the Supreme Court, who allegedly accepted bribes to act against Nino Gvenetadze, the former judge of the Supreme Court of Georgia. Nino Gvenetadze confirms that Tinatin Bezhashvili was used as a means to "neutralize" her. Misha Ositashvili, a person close to Tinatin Bezhashvili, claims that Bezhashvili, after receiving a sizeable amount of cash, joined as an ally in the SSSG's planned operation against Gvenetadze. In particular, as it turned out, Bezhashvili filed a complaint against Gvenetadze, accusing Gvenetadze of "falsifying" the judicial exams. Nino Gvenetadze resigned so as to avoid attracting publicity to the case.
14. Mikheil Chinchaladze's [statement](#), which he made at his meeting with Nino Gvenetadze, the chairperson of the Supreme Court, and the judicial corps, confirms the existence of

corruption in the judicial system. He describes specific circumstances and indications that point to a high degree of corruption in the country, yet he refrains from mentioning specific names.

15. Judge Lali Lazarashvili made a [statement](#) on April 29, 2013, claiming that Mikheil Chinchaladze was appointed with the purpose of establishing informal supervision over the judiciary. Mikheil Chinchaladze grossly interfered in the decision-making of the panel, thus instituting the "order." According to Lali Lazarashvili, Chinchaladze would demonstrate a special interest in property-related disputes in which the authorities were involved. Lali Lazarishvili claims that she became a victim of retaliation through a disciplinary mechanism once she refused to carry out Chinchaladze's unlawful instruction. Specifically, all the cases she had reviewed for the previous three years were re-examined, her compliance with deadlines was deemed prejudiced, and she was imposed a disciplinary measure – warning.

Furthermore, Lali Lazarashvili claims that the first instance and appellate courts used to pursue an erroneous practice of interpreting the legislation according to which the employer was granted the right to dismiss an employee at any time for any cause. Lali Lazarashvili managed to alter the established caselaw and introduce a new practice. Due to her "disobedience," Kote Kublashvili submitted a plea to the plenum. As per the Plenum's ruling, Lali Lazarashvili was transferred to the Criminal Cases Panel of the court against her will. Lali Lazarashvili was also pressurized by Vasil Roinishvili, the chairperson of the Civil Cases Chamber, who demanded from the judge the delivery of court rulings he desired. ("I need a team here, but you've created a "kindergarten"). Vasil Roinishvili is currently the deputy chairperson of the Constitutional Court.

16. From 2007 to 2023, the High Council of Justice made 535 decisions pertaining to the secondments of judges. Particularly noteworthy are the cases of transfers between court instances, which can be viewed as a form of punishment for the judiciary's "disobedient" behavior or, in certain cases, as a means of "promotion." The aforementioned violation has been confirmed by the judicial authorities themselves. In the report 2013-2017

published by the High Council of Justice (<https://shorturl.at/dhB35>), we can read that secondments of judges (transfer to district courts) were used as a means of punishing judges for their "resistance." Furthermore, the monitoring report of the High Council of Justice published by the GYLA in 2013 ([https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post\\_attachments/HCOJReport\\_final\\_geo.pdf](https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/HCOJReport_final_geo.pdf)) clearly shows that a number of flaws were identified in relation to secondments implemented in previous years. Of these, merely 19 of the 42 decisions on business trips that the High Council of Justice made in 2011 were accompanied by approved session protocols. In the majority of the cases, the protocols did not specify the duration of the secondments or, although not mandatory by law at the time, did not include the consent of judges to the business trips.

17. Another matter to consider is the connection between Lela Chania's property and Levan Murusidze. According to a [journalistic investigation](#), it has been established that Lela Chania is Judge Levan Murusidze's partner. They are allegedly engaged in a shared economy, in which case, her property must also be subjected to a mandatory declaration. Journalists investigated that Lela Chania possesses a significant amount of real property; in particular, she owns an apartment in Sairme, which she bought in 2016 (the purchase price USD 45,856). The same year she acquired an apartment on Mepe Mirian Street in Tbilisi, (the purchase price USD 30,000), a 627 square meter land parcel in Tbilisi (the purchase price USD 31,350), an apartment in 2015 in Batumi (the purchase price USD 24,000), and a 700 square meter land plot in the Didi Dighomi territory in Tbilisi (the purchase price USD 35,000). In addition, the investigation has revealed that Lela Chania owns luxurious movable objects, expensive jewelry, watches, and clothes. Considering that Lela Chania's official monthly remuneration is GEL 2750, it is questionable whether Lela Chania used her own funds to purchase the aforementioned properties.
18. According to a [TV broadcast](#) from February 16, 2019, it is established that, alongside other expensive property, Mikheil Chinchaladze is the actual owner of an apartment and a garage on Vera territory, which Chinchaladze's aunt purchased for GEL 105,000 (USD



63,000) in 2009. The apartments are registered in the aunt's name. In fact, according to an anonymous source consulted during the journalistic investigation, the genuine owner of the above real property is Mikheil Chinchaladze. In the above instance, Mikheil Chinchaladze was obliged to declare the property. In addition, proof of the property's origin also needs to be established.

19. The owner of "Basel" LLC addressed the media concerning the fact that high-ranking officials demanded he pay a bribe. Specifically, in 2017, Ronald Voldman, a Swiss investor and the owner of 89% of "Basel" LLC, sued his business partner. The case was transferred to the "Chamber of Big Money Cases" for consideration. In 2019, the case was sent to the Appellate Court and then to the Supreme Court. [Ronald Voldman claims](#) that certain high-ranking officials demanded from him the payment of a bribe in the amount of millions of Georgian Lari in order to proceed with the consideration of the case. As a result, the situation necessitated the involvement of the embassies of Switzerland and other countries so that the case consideration could continue without securing a bribe. The investor expresses his displeasure with the Georgian judicial system and names this shortcoming as a reason why investors refrain from investing in Georgia.

20. It has been established as [part of a journalistic investigation](#), that Valerian Tsertsvadze, the former chairman of the Tbilisi Court of Appeals, built a residential house in Dighomi, costing him USD 80,000, according to his tax declaration. His property list also includes some tennis courts. As for the real estate in Racha and Borjomi Gorges, they are registered in his wife's name. The properties call for doubts about whether Valerian Tsertsvadze may have another source of income outside the legal field.

This opinion has been supported by the correspondence that was obtained as part of the journalistic inquiry in 2018, which confirms Valeri Tsertsvadze's dual role as a judge and a businessman. Specifically, the correspondence shows that Tsertsvadze unofficially oversaw the "Elektronics" and "itechnics" chain stores. The fact that Valerian Tsertsvadze's vehicle was used in the "itechnics" commercial further confirms his informal management of "itechnics". In 2016, ["Transparency International - Georgia"](#)

requested public information to verify that Valerian Tsertsvadze's official state-granted vehicle was indeed featured in one of the commercials for "itechnic" LLC. In addition, it appears that the Tbilisi City Court imposed a lien on the bank accounts and assets of competitor company Iphone+ upon the request of "itechnics" LLC. Representatives of the company Iphone+ believe that the court's ruling was influenced by the Appellate Court's chairman, who was directly interested in the [outcome](#) of the case. According to the legislation, except for the exceptions allowed by the Constitution of Georgia, holding the office of a judge is incompatible with holding any other employment or engaging in any paid activity. The exceptions do not apply to Valerian Tsertsvadze's unofficial management of the business company.

21. Giorgi Mikautadze, deputy chairman of the Supreme Court of Georgia, owns a residential house in Tsavkisi, which, according to his property declaration, he purchased in 2020 and began construction in 2021. According to the data for 2023, the expenses incurred for the construction of the residence have amounted to GEL 405,000, and the construction has yet to be completed. [A journalistic investigation has revealed](#) that the justice used a USD 100,000 donation from his mother and a bank loan to build the house. It is necessary to look into the legality of the origin of the mother's USD 100,000 gift, as well as the extent to which the judge's income was adequate to build a lavish home, in light of his ongoing financial obligations.
22. The information concerns the alleged forgery of a [document](#) by Judge Giorgi Mikautadze, which mentions the income received by his mother, Darejan Kvaratskhelia, from the joint-stock company "Bakhtrioni" in the form of dividends. With respect to the aforesaid matter, Maya Mtsariashvili, the former prosecutor, [clarifies](#) that Mikautadze falsified official documents, and this is confirmed by financial reports retrieved from the Ministry of Finance. In particular, as per the report 2021, the company "Bakhtrioni" paid a total of 228,000 in dividends for all its shareholders. That year, Mr. Mikautadze's mother owned 17.26% of the shares, which means that she was eligible to receive a total of GEL 29,259 in the form of dividends, which, if distributed, would equal GEL 3279 per

month.

According to the official report for 2022, Giorgi Mikautadze's mother owned a total of 18.78% of the dividend. As a result, according to the same report, in 2022, Mikautadze's mother could receive a dividend in the amount of only GEL 16,900, which, if distributed on a monthly basis, would amount to GEL 1,400.

The declaration that Giorgi Mikautadze submitted states that the amount of dividends that Darejan Kvaratskhelia receives is GEL 17, 000 per month. Thus, according to the former prosecutor's reasoning, even in the event of possessing a 100 percent share in 2020-2022, Mikautadze's mother could not have received the dividend in the amount specified above, since the company, in that scenario, was supposed to distribute a dividend of at least GEL 200 000, whereas the company, in actuality, issued a total of GEL 90 000 worth of dividend. The preparation and/or use of a fake document is punishable by the Criminal Code.

**The Group of Independent Lawyers is a team consisting of professionals from the justice system (lawyers, former judges, legal experts), which aims to enhance the judicial system in Georgia through public advocacy and dialogue.**

The Group members are:

1. Ioseb Baratashvili (lawyer)
2. Maya Bakradze (former judge, lawyer).
3. Tamar Gegelia (Doctor of Law, Professor at the Caucasus University)
4. Irakli Gabrichidze (lawyer)
5. Levan Tortladze (Professor of the Institute of Public Affairs)
6. Irma Kakiashvili (jurist)
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8. Ucha Nanuashvili, Human Rights Center (former public defender)

9. Zaza Khatiashvili, lawyer (former chairman of the Bar Association)
10. Eka Tsimakuridze (jurist, Democracy Index).
11. Besik Loladze (professor, former judge of the Constitutional Court)
12. Tamar Laliashvili (professor, former judge of the Supreme Court)
13. Besik Sisvadze (former judge, lawyer).
14. Lia Mukhashavria (Human Rights Priority).
15. Natia Kutateladze (independent expert, former judge)
16. Irakli Shavadze (lawyer, former judge)
17. Tea Khamkhadze (lawyer, former judge).
18. Tamaz Jaliashvili (lawyer, former judge)
19. Davit Jandieri (jurist, former deputy minister of justice)
20. Kakha Tsikarishvili (a former member of the Disciplinary Committee of Judges)