



ISFED

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
FAIR ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

International Society for
Fair Elections and Democracy

Annual Report

2025

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1. LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2025 was a year defined by unprecedented legal, operational, and political challenges for civil society, independent media, and democratic institutions in Georgia. Following the introduction of restrictive legislation and political volatility in 2024, our organization and the broader pro-democratic movement were forced to operate in an increasingly hostile, authoritarian environment aimed at dismantling civic space and silencing independent oversight.

Over the course of 2025, Georgia experienced an unprecedented erosion of democratic governance and human rights protections. The ruling party systematically consolidated state power by enacting draconian legal mechanisms, including the Georgian Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), strict executive controls over foreign grants and technical assistance, and severe statutory restrictions on the constitutional right to peaceful assembly.

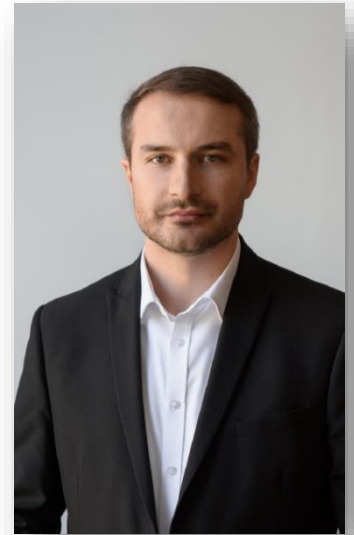
This legislative assault was accompanied by targeted institutional harassment. The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and the General Prosecutor's Office were weaponized against independent civil society organizations and media outlets through arbitrary financial inspections, demands for legally protected confidential data, and spurious investigations into alleged "sabotage". In August 2025, the court, at the request of the General Prosecutor's Office, arbitrarily froze the bank accounts of ISFED alongside six other leading civil society organizations. This forced asset freeze pushed our organization into a severe operational crisis, compelling the closure of our central and six regional offices.

The scope of political repression extended far beyond civil society leadership, directly targeting ordinary citizens, public servants, journalists, and civic activists. Dozens of peaceful protesters, civic leaders, and opposition figures face politically motivated criminal charges, lengthy prison sentences, or pre-trial detention. Law enforcement agencies repeatedly deployed excessive and disproportionate force against demonstrators, resulting in widespread injuries and severe violations documented by human rights monitoring groups.

Following public declarations in support of Georgia's European integration, hundreds of civil servants, including experienced staff at municipal agencies, cultural institutions, and the election administration, were arbitrarily dismissed or subjected to intimidation under the guise of hasty organizational restructuring.

Journalists and media professionals faced continuous harassment, physical violence, and financial strangulation. The state targeted online media outlets and independent platforms, seeking to cut off funding and restrict critical reporting.

The legislative agenda deliberately rolled back fundamental human rights standards, removing statutory guarantees for gender equality and introducing sweeping restrictions on free expression.



Despite these severe measures, ISFED did not stop. Operating largely voluntarily, our team remained steadfast in its core mission: defending human rights, exposing digital disinformation and foreign information manipulation, analyzing electoral developments, and providing free legal representation to citizens unjustly targeted, fined, or dismissed on political grounds.

In 2025, we published our comprehensive final analysis of the 2024 parliamentary elections, evaluated the hostile state of democracy surrounding the 2025 municipal elections, legally challenged administrative restrictions on observer rights, and expanded our social media monitoring to counter sophisticated state-aligned propaganda.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our team, legal counsel, donors, and partner organizations who continued their critical work under extreme pressure. We also proudly acknowledge former Executive Director Nino Dolidze, who was awarded the 2025 Madeleine K. Albright Democracy Award by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for her exceptional leadership in protecting election integrity and defending democracy in Georgia.

As we begin our new strategic cycle for 2026–2029, ISFED stands firmly alongside the Georgian people in demanding justice, the immediate release of those wrongfully detained, the restoration of the rule of law, and the continuation of Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic path.

Levan Natroshvili

Executive Director, ISFED

2. ABOUT ISFED

The **International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)** is an independent, impartial non-governmental organization founded in 1995 to conduct citizen monitoring of electoral processes.

Since its establishment, ISFED has monitored all elections held in Georgia. Over the years, the organization has made significant contributions to improving electoral legislation, safeguarding the electoral environment, and protecting the fundamental rights of citizens. ISFED’s scope of work encompasses key areas of democratic governance, including human rights protection, strengthening democratic institutions, countering foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), and supporting Georgia’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

Historically operating through a central office in Tbilisi, six regional offices (Batumi, Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Gori, Bolnisi, and Gurjaani), and local representatives nationwide, ISFED maintains one of the largest civic observation networks in Georgia.

ISFED is a membership-based organization uniting about 300 members. The highest governing body is the General Assembly of Members, which elects a nine-member Board of Directors for three-year terms. The Board appoints the Executive Director and oversees the strategic direction and general activities of the organization. In 2025, following the conclusion of Nino Dolidze's term, Levan Natroshvili was elected Executive Director.

3. ELECTORAL REFORM

In 2025, ISFED continuously monitored and analyzed legislative developments, evaluating their compliance with constitutional and international standards.

Key Legislative and Regulatory Developments Assessed in 2025:

- **CEC Decree Restrictions on Observers (April 3, 2025):** The Central Election Commission (CEC) amended its decree *"On Defining Rules and Conditions for Voting Conducted Through Electronic Devices,"* significantly restricting the rights of observers on election day. Observers were prohibited from requesting or checking voter identification documents and recording voter verification screens or ballots. ISFED challenged the decree in the Tbilisi City Court and Court of Appeals, arguing that restricting document checks undermines the ability to detect violations like carousel voting or voting with improper documents. Though the courts rejected the claims, ISFED documented the ongoing erosion of observer rights.
- **Modification of the Sakrebulo Electoral System:** Ahead of the 2025 municipal elections, the ruling party executed a three-stage modification of the municipal electoral system. Amendments included abolishing the 40% majoritarian threshold, increasing majoritarian seat shares, raising proportional thresholds, and modifying the electoral formula to favor the leading party. ISFED concluded these changes violated international standards and served narrow partisan interests.
- **Abolition of Out-of-Country Voting (October–December 2025):** The Georgian Dream parliament introduced and adopted a new Election Code on December 17, 2025, which completely abolished Georgian citizens' ability to vote in parliamentary elections from abroad. ISFED publicly opposed this move as a direct violation of universal suffrage and announced plans to challenge it before the Constitutional Court of Georgia and international human rights mechanisms.
- **Sweeping Legal Restraints (October 16, 2025):** Accelerated legislative amendments were passed across the Criminal Code, Code of Administrative Offenses, Organic Law on Political Associations, Election Code, and Organic Law on the Constitutional Court. ISFED assessed these changes as severe restrictions on civil and political rights aimed at consolidating authoritarianism.

4. ELECTION MONITORING

Final Analysis of the 2024 Parliamentary Elections

In early 2025, ISFED published its comprehensive final report on its monitoring of all stages of the 2024 parliamentary elections. The report documented systemic violations, including the widespread misuse of coercive, regulatory, financial, and media administrative resources by the ruling party.

The report concluded that four of the five fundamental principles of democratic elections—universal suffrage, free voting, equality, and vote secrecy—were fundamentally violated. The systematic scheme of voter pressure, intimidation, vote-buying, and compromised secrecy meant the election results could not be considered a true reflection of the will of Georgian voters.

Assessment of the 2025 Municipal Elections

In August 2025, ISFED published a pre-election environment assessment for the October 2025 municipal elections. The assessment reviewed the political climate, human rights situation, electoral framework, media environment, and severe obstacles facing civil society.

ISFED concluded that key conditions outlined in the Venice Commission’s Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters were not met. Due to the hostile regulatory environment, restriction of observer rights, and targeted asset freezes against monitoring organizations, ISFED announced it would not deploy a standard observation mission or methodology for the 2025 municipal elections, while continuing to track and analyze political developments.

Campaign Finance Monitoring

ISFED conducted a detailed financial analysis of the 2025 municipal elections campaign revenues and expenditures based on disclosures submitted to the Anti-Corruption Bureau (covering August 5 to October 15, 2025). The analysis highlighted disparities in campaign funding, the sources of party revenues, and the significant impact of campaign finance on political competition equality.



5. PROTECTING CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION ON POLITICAL GROUNDS

ISFED continued its free legal aid program in 2025, protecting public and private sector employees who faced politically motivated dismissals, illegal reorganizations, or rights violations.

In 2025, political discrimination in Georgia escalated into a systemic administrative purge targeting public servants, cultural sector professionals, and election administration personnel.

The primary legal instrument weaponized by state entities to mask politically motivated dismissals was "hasty organizational restructuring" (reorganization). This mechanism was aggressively deployed against public sector employees who publicly expressed pro-European stances or exercised their constitutional rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Despite facing severe administrative and financial intimidation, including the arbitrary freezing of its bank accounts, ISFED maintained its free legal aid network and continued strategic litigation to hold state institutions accountable.

Key Highlights and Impacts in 2025:

- **Legal Consultations:** Provided **114 free legal consultations** via hotline and regional attorney networks, assisting citizens with document preparation and legal filings.
- **Caseload:** Managed **191 cases** of alleged unlawful or politically motivated dismissals throughout the year.
- **Successful Outcomes:** Successfully resolved **20 cases** in court, securing reinstatement, compensation, and back pay for wrongfully terminated workers.

ISFED FREE LEGAL AID (2025)	
Legal Consultations Provided	114
Total Cases Managed	191
Cases Won/Resolved in Court	20

Strategic Litigation & Significant Victories:

- **National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation:** ISFED won lawsuits on behalf of six employees dismissed during the 2022 reorganization wave. The court deemed the dismissals unjustified and ordered the agency to pay compensation and missed salaries.
- **Supreme Court Victory (Elene Gakharia Case):** The Supreme Court of Georgia upheld lower court rulings in favor of a plaintiff illegally dismissed from the Rustavi City Center for Arts, Sports and Youth Development, ordering full compensation for forced absenteeism and additional monetary damages.
- **National Agency of Public Registry:** ISFED filed court cases representing **43 employees** who were arbitrarily dismissed starting in late December 2024 following their public stance on Euro-Atlantic integration.
- **Central Election Commission (CEC):** ISFED filed lawsuits to defend **six employees** fired during a hasty December 2024 CEC reorganization that targeted staff who held pro-European positions.
- **Public Sector Repression Documentation:** ISFED contributed analysis to the joint civil society report *Human Rights Crisis in Georgia Following the 2024 Parliamentary Elections*, documenting widespread purges in public service following peaceful civic protests.

6. SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING



ISFED maintained its continuous monitoring of information operations, coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB), and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Telegram.

Key Analytical & Investigative Outputs:

- Published **16 thematic investigative reports, articles, and blogs** focusing on state-linked propaganda, anti-Western narratives, and digital attacks.
- Released **three Quarterly Reports on Propaganda and Information Operations in Georgia**.
- Published a comprehensive study: *Five Years of Political Advertising on Facebook in Georgia*, detailing \$6.8 million USD in ad spending between 2020 and 2025, where ruling party and pro-government media pages dominated ad volume and expenditure.

- Investigated the *Financial Sources of the Georgian Dream Party Online Media Ecosystem*, revealing over 1.5 million GEL in direct party payments and 4.3 million GEL in simplified state procurement contracts directing public funds to 22 party-aligned online media outlets.

FIVE YEARS OF META ADS IN GEORGIA (2020–2025)	
Total Political/Social Ads	172 577
Total Cases Total Spend (Meta Platforms)	\$6.8 Million USD
Political Party Ad Spend	\$2.8 Million USD
Ruling Party Share of Spend	~50% of total party spend

Exposure of Manipulative Tactics:

- **Gender-Based Online Attacks:** Tracked sexist discrediting campaigns, visual manipulation, and online harassment targeting female politicians, journalists, and activists across Facebook and TikTok.
- **"Man-on-the-Street" Video Propaganda:** Exposed covert campaigns utilizing staged street interviews on Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube to manufacture fake public consensus; identified videos accumulating over 70 million views.
- **Platform Engagement with Meta:** Submitted evidence to Meta regarding **32 Russian-linked Facebook pages** operating in the South Caucasus conducting CIB, leading to their full removal.

7. EUROPEAN INTEGRATION



Promoting Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration remained a primary strategic direction for ISFED in 2025.

Key Advocacy & Public Actions:

- **Defending Visa Liberalization:** Issued joint civil society statements expressing deep concern over potential reviews of Georgia's visa-free regime with the EU. ISFED held the government accountable for democratic backsliding and urged immediate steps to align with EU values.
- **Europe Day 2025:** Joined the EU Delegation to Georgia for public Europe Day celebrations, engaging over 18,000 visitors. ISFED hosted the interactive game "*Election Associations*," raising awareness on democratic rights, civic participation, and youth engagement.

8. INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

ISFED actively participated in global observer networks, international expert platforms, and peer-learning exchanges to share expertise and refine monitoring methodologies:

- **Study Visit to Germany (February 2025):** Under the auspices of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), ISFED staff observed the early elections to the German Bundestag in Berlin, engaging with OSCE/ODIHR experts, media watchdogs, and election administrators.
- **EPDE Post-Election Webinar Moderation:** ISFED leadership moderated an international EPDE webinar analyzing the implications of the 2025 Georgian municipal elections for local democratic institutions.



- **FURIC 2025 Conference:** ISFED's executive director participated in the *FURIC 2025* conference organized with the European Parliament DEG and OSCE/ODIHR, contributing expertise on countering digital interference, AI threats, and covert online campaign financing.

- **Money in Politics 2025 Conference:** ISFED's representative participated in the regional conference held in Chişinău, Moldova.



- **Electoral Integrity Summit in Africa:** ISFED's representative participated in expert panels in Zambia on generative AI tools in elections and modern citizen observation techniques.