



A Timeline of the Georgian Government Clamp Down on Freedom of Speech and Cultural Expression

In Georgia, government interference in the work of critical voices in the cultural sphere have increased dramatically following the March 2021 appointment of Tea Tsulukiani as Minister of Culture, Sport, and Youth Affairs.

These incidents signal the risks of speaking out and pressure cultural workers into loyalty to the Ministry of Culture, underscoring efforts by the current government to control cultural life and free expression in Georgia. [Read Taming Culture in Georgia at PEN.org](#)

April 2021

The Ministry of Culture **creates a new directorate to oversee the National Museums system**, taking decision-making power away from qualified museum managers.

July 2021

The Ministry's "**reorganization**" of the museum system leads to the **first layoffs** of experts at the Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Employees were asked about their political affiliations and public criticism of the Ministry.

June 2021

The Ministry exerts pressure on the Litera literary contest, requiring government approval of the judging panel and the inclusion of a representative to fund the contest, hosted by the state-run Writers' House since 2015.

February 2022

A Ministry of Culture decree stipulates that the museum directorate would take control over the grants process, leading to **interference and obstruction in cultural research grants** that were already successfully awarded.

March 2022

Following posts he made criticizing Georgia's lack of support for Ukrainians under attack from Russia's invasion, **National Film Center (GNFC) director Gaga Chkheidze was fired over a politically-motivated audit** on the ostensible basis of alleged irregularities.

February 2022

The Ministry abruptly appoints a new director of the Dmanisi State Theater and **replaces theater director Lasha Chkhvimiani who had previously been threatened by the mayor** for staging Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People*. Chkhvimiani was the only candidate running and had served as director since 2017.

April 2022

The newly appointed **Georgian Film Academy president cancels screenings of Salomé Jashi's Taming the Garden**, a documentary film widely understood to be about former Georgian Dream leader and Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili.

May 2022

After further museum layoffs, unionized cultural workers protest their dismissals from the prominent Simon Janashia Museum history museum. Weeks earlier, several museum workers had formed the union in response to aggressive "reorganization."

August 2023

Writers' House director Natasha Lomouri is fired and replaced by a Georgian Dream MP who supported the "Foreign Agents" bill. Lomouri is notified that her dismissal would be effective in five days.

June 2023

The Ministry "**reorganizes**" the GNFC after employees criticize the film center's lack of independence in an open letter. A former government official who worked on crime prevention is newly appointed as director.

February 2023

Artist Sandro Sulaberidze is criminally investigated for his museum performance, in which he removed his work from the National Gallery wall and graffiti's "Art is alive and independent!"