

#CulturalDealEU

Statement of Solidarity with Georgia's Civil Society and Cultural Sectors Defending European Values

Following the recent Cultural Deal for Europe Annual Policy Conversation, "Culture: the Compass for Europe's Future," [Culture Action Europe](#), [Europa Nostra](#), and the [European Cultural Foundation](#) - the three initiators of the [Cultural Deal for Europe](#) campaign, express unwavering solidarity with the civil society in Georgia, and especially with Georgia's artists, cultural heritage professionals and other cultural workers, who are courageously standing up for democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression.

Since the end of October 2024, demonstrations have surged across Georgia following the fraudulent Parliamentary elections and government's consequent decision to delay its bid to join the European Union. These events follow the passage of the controversial "foreign agents" law in August 2024, which sparked a previous wave of civil unrest. The law mandates that NGOs receiving 20% or more of their funding from abroad register as "*pursuing the interests of a foreign power.*" About 95% of funding for civil society organisations in Georgia comes from international donors or development agencies¹. The law is having a significant detrimental effect on civil society, including in the field of culture and cultural heritage, and on overall democratic processes in the country.

Protesters defending democratic freedoms and a European future have faced violent crackdowns, including unlawful arrests and brutal treatment by police and special forces. Despite this repression, the movement continues to grow, driven by a resilient civil society and a vibrant cultural community.

Artists, cultural heritage professionals and other cultural workers, as well as civil society organisations are at the forefront of Georgia's fight for democratic values and human rights. Through peaceful civil resistance, they stand in defense of European values of democracy, rule of law and freedom of expression. Yet, they are increasingly targeted by political repression, media censorship, and violence. This must be unequivocally condemned by the European and international community.

¹ Asian Development Bank, Civil Society Brief: Georgia 2020
<https://www.adb.org/publications/civil-society-brief-georgia>



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We urgently call on the EU, Member States and civil society to stand firmly with the people of Georgia in their fight for democracy and a European future. We urge that EU Institutions, Member States, as well as international human rights institutions publicly support the democratic protests in Georgia, push for the immediate release of all unlawfully detained protesters - including journalists and artists on hunger strikes in Georgian prisons - and exert pressure on Georgian lawmakers to hold new, fair and free elections.

Culture Action Europe, Europa Nostra, and the European Cultural Foundation remain committed to safeguarding democratic values, artistic freedom, the rule of law and human rights. Together, we will continue to support the civil society, and especially the artists, cultural heritage professionals and other cultural workers, of Georgia in their struggle for freedom, justice, and a democratic future. We therefore appeal to artists, cultural and heritage organisations, and funding bodies - public and private, to take solidarity actions and provide means in support of Georgia's civil society in their ongoing battle for their European future.

