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The Situation of Environmental Defenders in Georgia Amid Authoritarian Consolidation

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Structural Causes of Environmental Protests in Georgia

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- Lack of public participation in environmental decision-making
 - Limited access to environmental information
 - Failure of judiciary to respond to environmental concerns of local communities

Peaceful protest often the only tool for communities to influence decisions

State Strategies of Repression and Marginalization

Environmental defenders labeled as:

Opponents of development (e.g., Namakhvani HPP, Balda etc.)

Threats to national interests, energy security, or sovereignty

“Foreign agents” via the 2024 Agent Law and before

Harassment and Non-State Violence

- Activists face intimidation, job loss, and public vilification (e.g., Tsothe Tvaradze, Varlam Goletiani, 5 miners from Chiatura)
- Attacks by non-state actors often tolerated by authorities (e.g., Balda incidents, 2024 Zodi attack on activists before a planned demonstration)
- Disinformation targeting experts (e.g., Tea Godoladze) creates chilling effect





- Law enforcement tactics:
 - Arbitrary detentions, surveillance, use of force
 - Bans on tents or shelters during protests
- Civil lawsuits used to suppress protest (e.g., Shukruti case, company demanding compensations, property seizure)



Chiatura Case

Criminalization of
environmental activism



Miners Giorgi Neparidze, Merab Saralidze, Archil Chumburidze, Tengiz Gvelesiani - imprisoned for protest-related charges

Among their demands was fair compensation for homes and land destroyed by the operations of 'Georgian Manganese'