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Businesses shutter in Georgia amidst 3-hour general strike

Monday 27 January 2025, by [Open Caucasus Media](#) (Date first published: 15 January 2025).

A three-hour general strike in Georgia demanding new and fair parliamentary elections has seen thousands of employees walk out of their jobs, with businesses temporarily shutting down.

The strike was held to varying degrees in towns and cities throughout Georgia from 15:00-18:00 on Wednesday.

The strike came in the wake of disputed elections in October and on the 49th consecutive day of protests following the government's [U-turn on EU membership negotiations](#).

In Tbilisi, employees were seen protesting outside banks, universities, shops, and restaurants, with many businesses displaying signs in their windows stating that they were closed due to the strike. Several major streets were also blocked as the protests swelled.

The strike proceeded mostly peacefully, however, footage from outside a Carrefour supermarket in Tbilisi's Saburtalo District showed a group of unknown men, one with a baseball bat, [attacking](#) strikers.

Since the anti-government protests began, groups of often masked men, known locally as Titushki and assumed to be working for the government, have frequently attacked protesters, government critics, and journalists, with the authorities making no arrests.

Some businesses, including one of the country's two largest banks, TBC, announced in advance that they had permitted employees to take part.

Others appeared to have taken part without their employers' consent. Several branches of Dunkin' Donuts in Tbilisi closed due to the strike. The franchise rights for the chain are owned by Soso Pkhakadze, a businessperson with close links to the ruling Georgian Dream party.

Wednesday's strike appeared to have been organised spontaneously and at a grassroots level, without the involvement of unions. It has been framed as a 'warning' to the government, with further action to follow if their demands are not met.

The Georgian Trade Unions Confederation (GTUC), the largest labour organisation in Georgia, previously defied public calls to announce a strike, telling *OC Media* that internal divisions as well as the illegal nature of strikes for any reason other than labour complaints, meant this was not on their agenda.

The GTUC has faced frequent accusations of being too close to the government. On the eve of October's parliamentary elections, the organisation's head, Irakli Petriashvili, [appeared](#) on pro-

government TV channel *Imedi* where he attacked the opposition UNM party and repeated some Georgian Dream messages, including condemning 'LGBT propaganda'.

Giorgi Diasamidze, the chair of LABOR, a member of the GTUC, appeared to break ranks on Monday, publishing a video address calling for people to join the strike.

'I know that your voice has never been heard and no one has listened to your voice, I know that you have many challenges and problems, but for our country, for the future of this country, I call on you to strike on 15 January for this country, for the democratic processes of this country', he said.

The official results of 26 October's parliamentary elections gave the ruling Georgian Dream party a majority, with 54% of the vote. However, local media, observer groups and oppositional politicians have documented widespread vote rigging by the ruling party and the institutions it controls, which they argue resulted in a favourable outcome for Georgian Dream.

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