

Happy

2022

Ex-president Saakashvili Transferred to Rustavi Prison

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Special Penitentiary Service has reported that ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili was transferred from the Gori Military Hospital back to the N12 Rustavi Prison on Wednesday night, stressing that the process was 'carried out in full compliance with the legislation.'

According to the penitentiary service, doctors decided to discharge Saakashvili from the hospital on December 27, but he did not obey the request of the staff regarding his transfer to Rustavi #12 facility. The agency noted that following a nervous breakdown, Saakashvili was observed with blood pressure fluctuation and, therefore, his transportation was postponed.

Opposition MP Salome Samadashvili said that moving the ex-president back to the prison should have happened based on the conclusion of independent medical experts. She noted that the ex-president's health aggravation would lead to heavy political consequences.

"I urge the government to allow independent experts to meet Saakashvili immediately to assess his health state," the MP said.

Member of the United National Movement (UNM) party Eka Kherkheulidze said that the ex-president was transferred to Rustavi prison against his will. She claimed that Saakashvili's health situation is critical, adding that the penitentiary service falsified the ex-president's medical record to move him to Rustavi prison.

Georgian Dream party MP Gia Volski says the law has not been violated by the transfer of Saakashvili to Rustavi No. 12 prison, as he had recovered and could not remain in hospital after the treatment.

Following his visit to the prison, Saakashvili's lawyer Nika Gvaramia said that no physical violence was used during the transfer against the ex-president, however, Gvaramia claims that he was feeling weak and was in a wheelchair.

"The ex-president had high blood pressure. He was under the effect of sedative pills and, as he told me, had no power to resist," Gvaramia said.

Opposition United National Movement party Head Nika Melia assessed Saakashvili's transfer to Rustavi prison as 'abduction'. According to him, this decision was made in Russia, adding that 'Russian special services are involved in this process.'

The ex-president was undergoing treatment in Gori military hospital following a hunger strike starting the day of his arrest on October 1, ahead of the October 2 municipal elections. In 2018, the Georgian Court convicted Saakashvili in absentia on two counts of abuse of power and sentenced him to six years in prison. He is also facing five additional charges, including illegal seizure of property, embezzlement, illegal rally dispersal, and illegal border crossing.



► According to the Special Penitentiary Service, Saakashvili's transfer to Rustavi prison was carried out in full compliance with the legislation.

Ukrainian ombudsman considers Saakashvili's treatment as torture

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

Public Defender of Ukraine Nino Lomjaria assesses the treatment of Mikheil Saakashvili as torture. The ombudsman is outraged over Saakashvili's transfer from Gori hospital.

"I'm surprised by the cynicism of how it was done. The sick Mikheil Saakashvili was taken out last night without warning from his lawyers. His health condition is critical and worrying: after three hypertensive crises he feels bad, he did not get out of bed for several days," Denisova wrote.

The ombudsman notes that transferring Mikheil Saakashvili to such a state in a penitentiary institution is a violation of a prisoner's rights, and the lack of medical care is a violation of human rights convention.

"I consider such actions of the Georgian government as torture and deprivation of the right to life of a Ukrainian citizen, Mikheil Saakashvili, which is a violation of the articles of the Civil and Political Rights Pact, which was ratified in Georgia in 2002," Denisova said.

He calls on the Public Defender to visit Nino Lomjaria in Mikheil Saakashvili's prison. He also appeals to the Ukrainian ambassador to help Saakashvili as a Ukrainian citizen as a consul.

In addition, Denisova called on international organizations and countries to condemn the actions of Georgian government officials.



► The third president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, who is now a citizen of Ukraine, was arrested in Tbilisi on October 1.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0976 | EURO - 3.5040 | GBP - 4.1737 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.1479 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3772 |

Toloraia hopes President of Georgia will veto the law on replacing State Inspector's Service with 2 new agencies

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian parliament has approved a bill to replace the State Inspector's Service with a Special Investigation Service and Personal Data Protection Service in March 2022.

81 MPs supported the amendments proposed by ruling GD MPs in its third and final reading in the 150-member legislative body.

Ruling party MPs explained that the 120 employees of the State Inspector's Service will not lose their jobs and will be allocated to the newly established agencies.

State Inspector Londa Toloraia said that the parliament 'abolished' the State Inspector's Service 'prematurely' and expressed her hope that President Zurabishvili will veto the bill.

"The word of the President of Georgia is important now. I want to thank her for her expressive support," she said.

NGOs Democracy Index - Georgia, Independent Lawyers Group, and Democracy Research Institute also issued a statement, calling on the President to use the constitutional authority and veto the aforementioned bill that was submitted for signature.

Inspector welcomed the decision about staff, saying that 'after a 3-day struggle between us and the international community, the non-governmental sector, parliament changed its attitude towards the staff and decided to redeploy staff to the 2 newly created agencies, but this does not change the result - an independent state institution no longer exists.'

She said that at the committee meeting she didn't hear a single reasoned answer on why the agency wasn't involved in the 'reform', why the process was accelerated, why the head of the agency who was elected for 6 years could not remain, and how these two directions become stronger.

Toloraia reminded the MPs who pressed the support button for this law that the supervisory agencies are not created by countries to unconditionally agree with all the decisions of the government. Supervisors are set up in developed countries to have a say when state agencies violate human rights.



► "You decided to send home the state inspector and 3 deputies, who, despite all obstacles, were able to set up an independent state agency," Toloraia addressed GD MPs.

"In contrast, Parliament overthrew an independent agency, which acted only in accordance with the law; the agency, which boldly charged the public institutions with the responsibility for illegal interference in the private life of others and illegal use of other people's data; that first responded to the publication of the secret recordings; which was doing its best with limited resources to investigate the facts of violence committed by the law enforcers; dared to say out loud that it encountered obstacles in the process of obtaining evidence necessary to punish violent officials; the agency, which really stood on the European path and established new, European standards; which was able to gain unprecedented public support in 2 years, clearly demonstrated in the last 3 days; and that dared to prepare the legislative changes and boldly expressed its critical opinion while these reforms were façade."

Earlier on 30th of December European Parliament member Viola von Cramon called the possible adoption of a bill 'disturbing'. She added that the Georgian government is 'trying to abolish' the Inspector's Service, calling it 'one of the most professional and well-functioning state institutions.'

Recall, that Foreign dignitaries have expressed their concern over this bill as well. Ambassador of France to Georgia called for 'wide consultations' regarding the ongoing reform. Deputy Head of mission at the British Embassy expressed her hope that 'any decision' will be afforded with the necessary time and care. Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Norway called for an 'open and transparent process. Earlier, the US ambassador has called on parliament to pause splitting of State Inspector's Service into 2 agencies, and the EU delegation head has announced that 'abolition' of State Inspector's Service 'bears risks' for Georgian democracy.

Meanwhile, the ruling party argues that both the investigative and personal data protection agencies will be strengthened as a result of the changes, stating that, additional functions will be added.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 31

Day Partly cloudy
High: 10°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: -1°C

SATURDAY JANUARY 1

Day Partly cloudy
High: 9°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: -1°C

published by **The Messenger**

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

Founded by Prof. **Zaza Gachechiladze**
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Phone: +995 99 56 56 21; +995 77 76 00 00
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Nino Kavelashvili
Design and Layout

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail. The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper,

and, therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements. The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.