

## Tbilisi City Council Revokes Recreation Zone Status from Silk Factory Territory

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Tbilisi City Council revoked the recreation zone status from the territory of the silk factory, allowing for the construction of two skyscrapers in its place. 29 deputies supported the zone change, while 3 were against it.

According to the decision, the territory of 33,447sq.m. was reclassified as a public-business zone 2. Previously, it held the status of recreation zone 2, which prohibited construction on the former silk factory premises. With the new functional zone designation, it became permissible to build two skyscrapers in this area.

On December 28, 2023, prior to this decision, the Tbilisi City Council had approved the multifunctional center project in the Laguna area.

The Bidzina Ivanishvili Foundation Cartu plans to construct a 65-meter multifunctional building on the Laguna Vere and former silk factory site.

The Urban Studies Center published a document on December 12, noting that the risks associated with the project have not been properly investigated. According to the document, the



planned construction contradicts the principles of sustainable development, the Law of Georgia on cultural heritage, and the principles and objectives of the capital's land use master plan

and transport policy.

As mentioned in the document, the planned construction will fundamentally alter the spatial-planning structure of the historical part of Tbilisi, jeopardize

the potential for connecting the open and recreational spaces of Vere Gorge and Mtkvari bank, and have a detrimental impact on the traffic situation.

Only 25% of the buildings in

the skyscraper project will be designated for public-business purposes, while the remaining 75% are intended for residential use, according to the project.

## Ministry of Internal Affairs: 20 Arrested at Anti-Eviction Rally

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

While the National Bureau of Enforcement, along with the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, forcibly evicted the Khatiashvili family

from the apartment, an anti-eviction rally outside the building took place. According to the Internal Ministry statement, 20 people were arrested during the rally.

Supporters of the Khatiashvili

family gathered at Kekelidze from 9 o'clock in the morning on January 23. They peacefully resisted the officers of the National Bureau of Enforcement and protested the eviction decision. Despite the opposition, the bureau

carried out the enforcement action and forcibly removed the family from the apartment.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that during the eviction process, 18 people were arrested under administrative rules, while 2 were apprehended under criminal law charges related to group damage to other people's property. An investigation has been launched on charges of resisting a police officer, a special penitentiary service employee, or another government representative and obstructing the protection of public order.

According to Nona Kurdovanidze, the chairman of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), lawyers are not allowed to visit the individuals arrested at the anti-eviction rally. Kurdovanidze urged the Ministry of Internal Affairs to immediately provide lawyers with information about the whereabouts of the detainees and allow them to visit.

"Some of those arrested on Kekelidze Street were likely transferred to the police building on Kakheti highway. GYLA

lawyers are on-site, attempting to meet with the detainees. They have the necessary warrants with them.

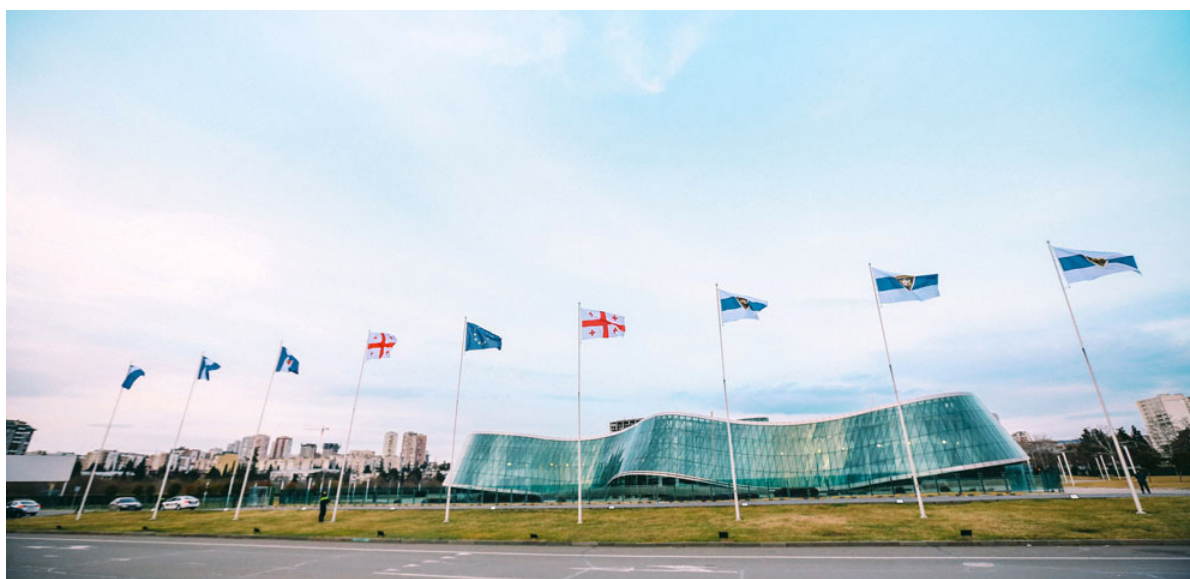
Although the lawyer has the right to meet with the client immediately and without hindrance, our lawyers are not allowed to do so. The authorities do not even confirm whether specific persons are present or not.

This is not the first time lawyers have faced barriers in meeting with detainees," Kurdovanidze wrote.

The Media Advocacy Coalition condemned the illegal interference in the activities of journalists and the arrest of a journalist during the coverage of the eviction. In response to these incidents, the organization issued a statement.

According to their assessment, the mentioned incidents worsen the media environment and constitute a clear violation of journalists' fundamental rights.

"On January 23, 2024, while covering the eviction process from a residential building on



CONTINUED ON Page 2



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6633; Euro - 2.8971; GBP - 3.3877; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0241; Swiss Franc - 3.0658

# Ministry of Internal Affairs: 20 Arrested at Anti-Eviction Rally

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Kekelidze Street in Tbilisi, journalists from the online media outlet 'Mautskebeli' were physi-

cally assaulted by the police while performing their professional duties. In particular, 'Mautskebeli' journalist Rati Ratiani was thrown down from

a car by a policeman using force while performing his professional duties. The journalist's life and health were threatened by this action.

While speaking about the ethics charter, the representative of 'Mautskebeli' noted that law enforcement officers physically assaulted three more journalists, including Natia Karchiladze, Ani Giorgadze, and Giorgi Arobelidze. Gela Mtiylishvili, the editor of 'Mountain Stories,' was arrested while performing his professional duties and subse-

quently transferred to the Vake regional police department," the statement reads.

The Media Advocacy Coalition called on the Special Investigation Service to urgently investigate cases of violence against journalists, illegal interference in their professional activities, and unlawful detention.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Finance Minister Lasha Khutsishvili Meets with Swedish Ambassador Anna Lyberg



The Minister of Finance Lasha Khutsishvili held an introductory meeting with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Georgia, Anna Lyberg. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister of Finance, Ekaterine Guntsadze,

and Erik Iles, Deputy Ambassador of Sweden.

The parties discussed issues of bilateral cooperation, with special attention given to the ongoing projects of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in Georgia.

The Finance Minister expressed gratitude to the Ambassador for the invaluable assistance provided by the Swedish government in the field of development.

During the meeting, Khutsishvili introduced the Swedish diplomat to the

country's economic and fiscal parameters and future priorities.

The Ambassador of Sweden congratulated the Georgian side on attaining the status of a candidate country for the European Union, praising the long-standing cooperation between the two nations.

According to the released statement, with the support of the Kingdom of Sweden, areas such as the development of democratic governance, protection of human rights, the education sector, environmental protection, and the development of trade and the private sector are financed in Georgia.

### Justice Ministry to Simplify Eviction of Renters, Says Minister Bregadze

According to Minister of Justice Rati Bregadze, a draft law that simplifies the eviction of a renter from an apartment will be submitted to the parliament during the spring session.

On January 22, during the

briefing held after the government session, Bregadze announced that the work on the draft law has already been completed.

evant decision. Eviction will only take place after it is confirmed by the contract that one of the parties has failed to fulfill their obligations. "However, the en-



After the legislative changes come into effect, "legal relations related to rent and lease will be simplified for the citizens."

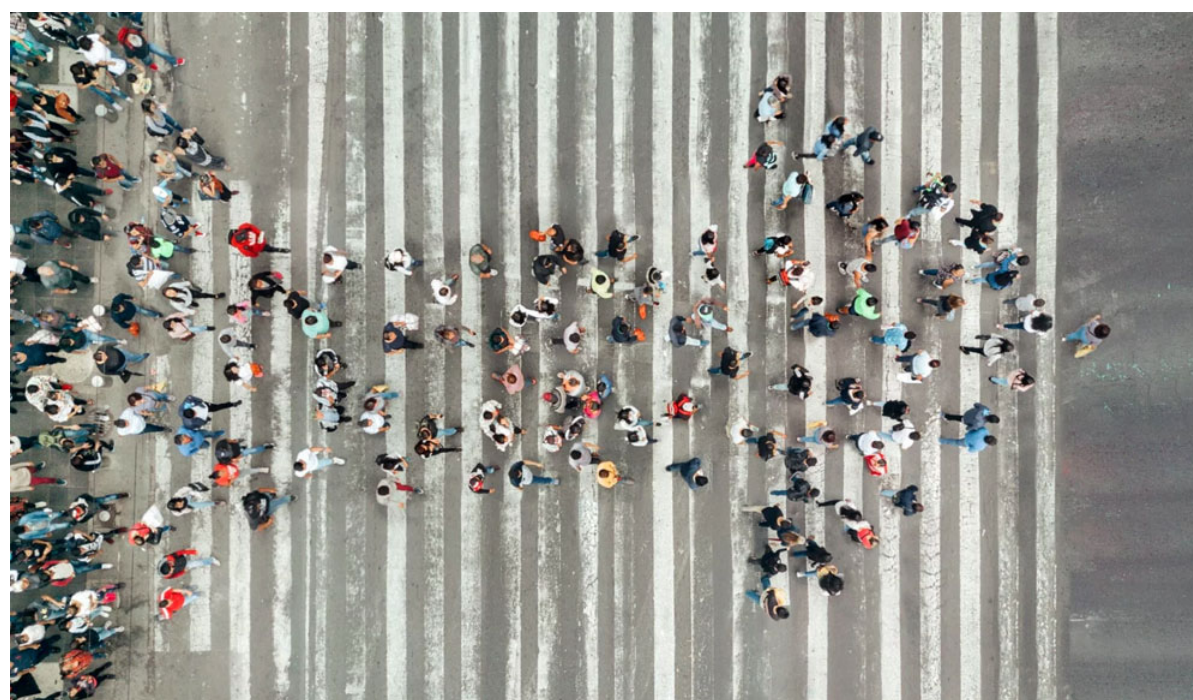
"Eviction is not carried out directly by the executor but by the enforcement police if the person does not agree with the rel-

tire process that a person has to go through now—when someone lives in their apartment on rent, does not fulfill their obligations, and may live for years—will be much shorter, and this process will be completed in just a few months," Bregadze said.

# NGOs from Georgia and Ukraine selected for EBRD's first Civil Society Organisation Steering Committee

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has selected its first Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Steering Committee. It comprises 13 international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and CSOs from across the EBRD's regions, including Georgian Society of Nature Explorers 'Orchis' and Transparency International Ukraine.

The CSO Steering Committee will be responsible for advising the Bank on country and sectoral public consultations. It will pro-



vide input to and coordination of the CSO programme at the EBRD's Annual Meeting and Business Forum and will also broaden the EBRD's engagement with local CSOs.

"The EBRD attaches enormous importance to its dialogue with CSOs, and the launch of this first Steering Committee is a further step towards closer cooperation on themes that are vital for sustainable economic development in the regions where we work," EBRD President Odile Renaud-Basso said.

The Committee's mandate runs until the end of 2025 and the selection process for the next CSO Steering Committee will take place then.

([euneighbourseast.eu](http://euneighbourseast.eu))

## Weather

Wednesday, January 24

Day Cloudy  
High: 2°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: -3°C

Thursday, January 25

Day Cloudy  
High: 3°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: -3°C

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