

Former President Mikheil Saakashvili Imprisoned as Preventive Measure in Border Crossing Case

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia's third president, has been imprisoned as a preventive measure in his ongoing case of illegally crossing the state border. Judge Mikheil Jinjolia, who replaced Nino Chakhnashvili, granted the prosecutor's request, leading to this decision.

"The court believes that, considering the nature of the committed crime, there are relevant threats. Given that the trial has restarted with witnesses being questioned, there are risks of witness tampering, evidence destruction, and the possibility of committing a new crime. Therefore, the petition is well-founded," Judge Jinjolia explained.

Saakashvili's lawyer, Beka Basilaia, strongly criticized the ruling. "This is a politically motivated, unfounded, illegal, and at the same time extremely idiotic decision. The person is in a detention facility with another three years of imprisonment assigned as punishment, and the imprisonment is ordered not to influence witnesses in a case where the witnesses have already been questioned once," Basilaia stated.

He further elaborated, "The person under the supervision of



the guard is given a prison sentence so that he does not commit a new crime. That is, the one who has already been executed and is in a prison institution, in this case, a medical

institution, is additionally given double imprisonment, which has no legal or factual content."

Basilaia suggested that the government feared Saakashvili's potential release, though he was

uncertain of the reasons or mechanisms behind this fear. "Because of these fears, they brought this illegal decision to the court," he added.

Saakashvili faces five legal

cases in Georgia, with verdicts already issued in two and three still under review. He was sentenced to six years in prison and was arrested in 2021 after returning to Georgia before the elections.

Azerbaijani Journalist Afgan Sadygov Granted Extradition Custody by Georgian Judge

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Sadygov has been placed in extradition custody by Judge Ketavan Jachvadze. Sadygov will remain in prison until a final decision on his extradition to Azerbaijan is made.

Sadygov was arrested in Tbilisi on August 2 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the agency, Sadygov is wanted in Azerbaijan on charges of threats and extortion, which led to his arrest for extradition purposes.

Sadygov's family has labeled the Azerbaijani accusations as falsified, expressing fears that he will face severe treatment under President Aliyev's regime if extradited. Before his arrest, Sadygov was prevented from boarding a flight from Tbilisi on July 18, with airport officials informing him that he could only leave the country by traveling to Baku.

In an interview with Radio Liberty, Sadygov claimed that his persecution is linked to his journalistic work in Azerbaijan. He had been arrested twice in Baku, first in 2016 and again in 2020, the latter resulting in a seven-year prison sentence. Sadygov began a hunger strike in 2020, and in 2021, the Supreme Court reduced his sentence to four years. After nearly two years, he was released under amnesty.

Sadygov came to Tbilisi for medical treatment with the aid of an international organization. Fearing for his safety, he sought help to relocate to a third country.

"We submitted an application, maybe they will help us to go to a third country. A person came out from the embassy, we told them why we came, we gave them a letter, which states that it is no longer safe for us to be in Georgia and that they should help us go to some third country. We are very afraid here. I don't know what will happen after a minute or an hour," Sadygov told Radio Liberty.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze Promises Meeting with Experts for Families Affected by Shovi Disaster



Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has pledged to organize a meeting for the families of those who died in last year's Shovi disaster.

The meeting will allow them to hear from experts and ask questions about the investigation.

“Even today, I promised the affected families that in the next few days we can organize a meet-

investigation. They will have the opportunity to listen to experts and ask additional questions if they have any,” said Kobakhidze.

On August 3, 2023, at around 4:00 PM, a glacial avalanche hit the Shovi resort in Racha, devastating the area and resulting in the deaths of 33 people. Search and rescue operations continued for several weeks following the disaster.

To honor the victims, government representatives, including Prime Minister Kobakhidze, visited the site of the disaster. Kobakhidze announced that a church will be built at the site as a gesture of sympathy for the families of the victims.

Prime Minister Responds to US Aid Suspension

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze addressed the recent suspension of \$95 million in US aid to the Georgian government, emphasizing the need for corresponding actions from American partners. Speaking to reporters in Beshumi, Kobakhidze noted that steps are being taken by the



Georgian side but the responses from the US have not aligned with these efforts.

“We will be interested and find out all this. The most important thing for us is that we are in standby mode,” Kobakhidze stated. He added that he has not yet received detailed information on the exact amount of aid suspended.

Kobakhidze expressed hope for a change in approach, particu-

larly after the end of the war in Ukraine. “Steps are being taken from our side, and the most important thing is to receive corresponding steps from the American partners. What we see so far, these are not corresponding steps, although I think that in the near future, especially and first of all after the end of the war in Ukraine, approaches will be radically and thoroughly changed,” he said.

Advertisement for the festival 'LIANA' featuring dates (21 AUGUST BORJOMI, 23, 25 AUGUST BATUMI, 15, 17, 18, 20 SEPTEMBER TBILISI) and organizers (LIANA ISSAKADZE, GIORGI ISSAKADZE).

Weather forecast for Monday, August 5: Day Clear, High: 33°C; Night Mostly Cloudy, Low: 21°C.

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