

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Public Defender Reports Alarming Abuse of Protest Detainees in Georgia

Georgia's Public Defender, Levan Ioseliani, has raised serious concerns about alleged violence and inhumane treatment of detainees arrested during recent protests. According to Ioseliani, 124 out of 156 individuals – nearly 80% – claimed they were subjected to excessive force by police.

"This is a very disturbing number," Ioseliani stated. "If we look at the dynamics, including previous demonstrations, the number of citizens who claim that there was an excess of force on the part of the police is increasing alarmingly. I once again call on the police not to go beyond the norms established by the law and to use only legitimate force against citizens."

Ioseliani criticized what he described as a culture of impunity within law enforcement, warning that unchecked misconduct fosters escalating brutality. "When specific people are not punished for such misdemeanors, it becomes more and more brutal," he said.

He expressed particular outrage over attacks on journalists covering the protests, calling such incidents "monstrous." "It is unimaginable to treat people like this, to attack them – especially journalists who are doing their duty and reporting information, which is their constitutional right," Ioseliani remarked.

The Public Defender emphasized that law enforcement must adhere to legal standards and urged authorities to hold perpe-



trators accountable. "Such actions should be followed by concrete responsibility. It is abso-

lutely unacceptable when the police overreach," he said.

He also called on protest par-

ticipants to remain peaceful. "I ask the participants of the rally to try as much as possible not to

go beyond the forms of peaceful expression of protest," Ioseliani added.

NGOs Demand Accountability for Police Violence Against Peaceful Protesters

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have strongly condemned the crackdown on peaceful demonstrators by police forces during recent protests in Georgia. The NGOs allege widespread violations of human

rights, including inhumane treatment, illegal detentions, and targeted attacks on journalists, actions they describe as unconstitutional and incompatible with international law.

The organizations claim that the Georgian government, which they label as "self-proclaimed,

unconstitutional, and illegitimate" following what they describe as "hijacked elections," is engaging in "unprecedented repression" against peaceful protesters. Among the violations cited are:

- Disproportionate Police Deployment: Heavily armed Spe-

cial Tasks Department units, led by U.S.-sanctioned Zviad Kharazishvili, reportedly used tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and water cannons mixed with an unknown chemical substance causing severe discomfort.

- Masked and Unidenti-

able Officers: Officers wore masks and lacked distinguishing marks on their uniforms, making accountability difficult and allegedly encouraging impunity.

- Provocation and Brutality: Law enforcement reportedly provoked protesters, used offensive language, and resorted to physical violence, including dragging peaceful participants from the rally site.

- Illegal Detention Practices: Protesters were allegedly detained randomly, including individuals leaving the rally peacefully. Many detainees were denied access to legal representation or contact with relatives, with their locations concealed by authorities.

NGOs highlighted a series of targeted attacks on journalists, which they claim occurred daily during the protests. Over 50 journalists were reportedly



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obstructed or assaulted, with several sustaining severe injuries. Notable incidents involved Formula journalist Guram Rogava, TV Pirveli journalist Mariam Gaprindashvili, and Publika

journalist Aleksandre Keshelashvili, who reportedly suffered significant health impacts.

The NGOs issued a series of urgent demands to address the alleged abuses:

- Ministry of Internal Affairs:

Cease violent retaliation, release detained demonstrators, and ensure police act within the bounds of the law.

- Special Investigation Service: Conduct a thorough investigation into alleged crimes, including obstruction of journal-

istic activity, and promptly submit findings to the Prosecutor's Office.

- Prosecutor's Office: Oversee investigations effectively, prosecute perpetrators, and review the legality of arrests.
- Judiciary: Stop using

legal mechanisms for punitive actions against peaceful protesters and ensure justice for victims.

- Constitutional Court: Declare elections invalid due to alleged procedural violations and secrecy surrounding the process.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Ukraine Condemns Georgian Government Over Protest Crackdown



Comment of the MFA on the further aggravation of the internal political situation in Georgia

02 December 2024 14:00



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine strongly condemns the ongoing human rights violations and the use of force against peaceful demonstrators in Georgia. Violence will not remain without consequences.

The Georgian authorities must respect the fundamental right of their citizens to peaceful protest. Particularly, when the protests are driven by the government's decision to halt Georgia's progress towards EU membership, contrary to the European aspirations of the Georgian people.

Ukraine has condemned the Georgian government for its handling of peaceful protests and alleged human rights violations. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized Tbilisi's decision to halt EU accession talks until 2028, which sparked widespread demonstrations.

"Violence will not remain without consequences," the ministry stated, urging the Georgian authorities to respect citizens' rights to peaceful assembly.

Ukraine criticized the Georgian government for contradicting its pro-European claims. "The Georgian government says it supports EU integration, but its

actions show a pivot toward Moscow," the statement read. Drawing comparisons to Ukraine's past struggles, it noted, "Politicians who tried to derail Ukraine's EU path also claimed they were just 'pausing' integration."

The ministry rejected the Georgian government's framing of the protests as a "Ukrainian scenario" and accused it of implementing a "Belarusian scenario", eroding democratic norms while intimidating citizens. Ukraine also expressed solidarity with Georgian diplomats who opposed the government's decision to suspend EU talks. "In 2004 and 2014, Ukrainian diplomats stood for democracy during critical times. We recognize the courage of Georgian colleagues now doing the same," the statement said.

Ukraine reaffirmed its commitment to

Georgia's European future, calling EU integration essential for stability and democracy. "Our solidarity with the Georgian people remains unwavering," the ministry concluded.

Giorgi Gakharia Urges Civil Servants to Speak Out Against



Government

Giorgi Gakharia, leader of the opposition party For Georgia, called on public officials to express their opinions freely, emphasizing the need for a depoliticized public sector.

Addressing civil servants, Gakharia said, "We all have the right to a different opinion, whether or not we are paid from the state budget. You have a responsibility to always speak your mind, especially when your views align with the majority of the country's population."

He urged those who have remained

silent to not fear retribution, assuring them of protection under Georgian and international law. "The more civil servants who speak their mind, the safer you will be," he said, adding that depoliticizing the public sector is critical to freeing it from political interference.

Gakharia also highlighted troubling

allegations of abuse against detainees, claiming many individuals detained by the ruling Georgian Dream party face inhumane conditions. "Pre-detention isolators are overcrowded, and some detainees spend nights in vehicles," he said. Gakharia further alleged that numerous detainees leave detention facilities with injuries resulting from physical violence.

He called on the public to demand the release of those he described as "illegally detained," stating, "The state is physically abusing them."

Top EU officials visit Kyiv on their first day in office

On 1 December, on their very first day in office, the new Head of the European Council António Costa, together with the EU High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission Kaja Kallas and the

new Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos arrived in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv to demonstrate the EU's "unwavering support to the Ukrainian people and its courageous struggle for

a just and lasting peace".

This visit was also planned to mark the anniversary of Ukraine's independence referendum, which took place on 1 December 1991.



At a joint press conference with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, António Costa, who previously served as a Prime Minister of Portugal, told journalists that this visit, on this particular day, had a very special meaning for him. "On the first

of December, for almost 400 years, every single year, my own country celebrates its independence day: our national sovereignty, the right to self-determination, the right of territorial integrity and respect for its borders. Ukraine, like my country, like all countries in the world, has the same right under the UN Charter," he said.

António Costa added that the EU was preparing a 15th sanctions package against Putin's regime and that starting from next month the EU plans to provide Ukraine Euro1.5 billion of assistance every month, for a full

year. This money comes from the proceeds of Russia's frozen assets and can also be used for military purposes.

He also announced that the European Union and Ukraine will work to open at least two clusters of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU during the first half of next year.

"Already, gradual integration is starting in different policy areas, such as roaming, and a number of products across next year could be traded as if Ukraine is already in the Single Market," Costa said.

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, December 3

Day Cloudy
High: 7°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 1°C

Wednesday, December 4

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 9°C

Night Clear
Low: 0°C

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