

Video Circulates of Georgian MPs Physically Attacking Citizen in Abu Dhabi



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Georgian citizen Lasha Gabitashvili has accused members of the ruling Georgian Dream party of physically assaulting him at a hotel in Abu Dhabi. Gabitashvili, who had publicly criticized the MPs a day earlier, shared a video on social media showing MPs Irakli Zarkua, Viktor Sanikidze, and Gela Samkharauli allegedly attacking him.

In a Facebook Live broadcast,

Gabitashvili recounted the incident, stating that the MPs confronted him during breakfast with his wife and attacked him in retaliation for his criticism.

"I came for breakfast, and they attacked me, likely because of the videos I shared yesterday. I'm here alone with my wife, and they thought I'd be scared. But I'm not afraid," Gabitashvili said. He added that he believes the assault stemmed from comments he made accusing the MPs of betrayal and criticizing

their stance on political issues.

The altercation follows a confrontation on January 12, during which Gabitashvili approached the MPs in public, accusing them of being "slaves and traitors." He also questioned Zarkua about the arrests of demonstrators during a rally in Batumi on January 11-12. Video footage from the confrontation shows Zarkua avoiding the question and moving the camera away before the argument escalated.

After the physical attack, Zarkua and Sanikidze released a video addressing the incident.

"Some incident happened. It's not something to be proud of, but we are a self-respecting nation. When they insult my family, there will always be a response," Zarkua stated.

Sanikidze added, "Everything is fine. There will always be an answer to these stateless people, wherever we are."

Batumelebi Issues Statement Condemning Arrest and Obstruction of Journalist Guram Murvanidze



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The editorial team of *Batumelebi* has released a statement condemning the arrest of their journalist, Guram Murvanidze, and the blatant obstruction of his journalistic duties. They have called on citizens, supporters, and partners to stand against this violation of press freedom.

According to the statement, Murvanidze was arrested on January 12 at approximately 9:20 PM while covering a rally near the Constitutional Court in Batumi. He was subsequently transferred to the Poti pre-trial detention center and allowed to meet with his lawyer only at 6 AM the following morning.

The investigation is reportedly being conducted under Articles 166 (petty hooliganism) and 173 (disobedience to legal orders) of the Code of Administrative Offenses. However, *Batumelebi's* statement underscores that Murvanidze's narrative indicates deliberate interference with his journalistic activities.

As described in the statement, Murvanidze was filming police arrests at the rally when Batumi Police Chief Irakli Dgebuadze allegedly demanded to know who was recording. After Murvanidze identified himself as a *Batumelebi* employee, Dgebuadze reportedly insulted him and ordered officers to

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8292; Euro - 2.8852; GBP - 3.4287; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7534; Swiss Franc - 3.0870

Batumelebi Issues Statement Condemning Arrest and Obstruction of Journalist Guram Murvanidze

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confiscate his phone.

Murvanidze recounted that police officers tried to take his phone as he attempted to secure

it. Despite resisting briefly, the phone was confiscated, and he was arrested without further resistance. Video footage confirms that Murvanidze did not resist arrest.

After his arrest, Murvanidze alleges he was verbally insulted and pressured to reveal his phone's password. The statement by *Batumelebi* highlights that the aggression from the po-

lice escalated after Murvanidze identified himself as their journalist.

The editorial team has called for a thorough investigation and urged the Special Investigation

Service to hold those responsible accountable. They emphasized that this incident represents a direct attack on journalistic freedom and on *Batumelebi* as a publication.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

NGO Coalition My Vote Highlights Repression Against Civil Servants



The coalition of non-governmental organizations *My Vote* has issued a statement condemning what it describes as systematic repression against civil servants in Georgia. The organization asserts that recent dismissals from state agencies are demonstrative and punitive measures aimed at silencing dissent.

According to Nino Lomjaria, a representative of *My Vote*, employees from 20 state agencies have been dismissed for political reasons. She outlined several factors behind the dismissals:

- Civil servants signed petitions advocating for the protection of Article 78 of the Constitution.

- They participated in protests.
- They publicly criticized state violence against peaceful demonstrators, including on social media.

Lomjaria noted that reorganization,

sion to suspend European integration efforts.

The coalition has called on stakeholders to address these alleged violations and ensure accountability for what they describe as targeted political retaliation.

Personal Data Protection Service Denies Claims of Civil Servant Dismissals



The Personal Data Protection Service has issued a statement refuting allegations made by the *Independent Professional Union of Public Servants, Article 78 of the Constitution*, regarding the dismissal of a civil servant. The agency asserts that no civil servant has been fired since its establishment on March 1, 2022, nor has any employee under a short-term

labor contract been dismissed before the end of their agreement.

The statement addresses what the agency calls "disinformation" spread by the union and amplified by media outlets.

"We announce that the Personal Data Protection Service has not fired any civil servant since its establishment. Additionally, all short-term labor contracts for

auxiliary and non-permanent tasks, including expert work, were honored without premature termination," the agency stated.

The service described the allegations as a "deliberate attempt to damage the reputation of the agency" and emphasized that the claims are unfounded.

EU-funded reconstruction of Russian-destroyed kindergarten starts in Makariv, Ukraine

Weather

Tuesday, January 14

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 13°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 5°C

Wednesday, January 15

Day Cloudy

High: 8°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 3°C



Work has begun on the reconstruction of the Teremok kindergarten in the village of Makariv,

in the Kyiv region of Ukraine, destroyed in 2022 by the Russian military, according to the Recovery Window network, a media partner of the EU NEIGHBOURS east programme.

The rehabilitation of the facility is part of the EU Support for the Recovery of Makariv programme, funded by the European Union and managed by NEFCO. Co-financing is

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also provided from the community budget.

The permit for the construction of the Teremok kindergarten, which was destroyed by the Russians in March 2022, was granted early last December. The start of construction was postponed due to adjustments to the project documentation due to changes in state construction standards.

The construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of

2025.

The Ukraine Recovery Window media network brings together 80 independent regional and national media and analytical platforms to monitor and report on all aspects of reconstruction in Ukraine, highlighting EU and international donor support for recovery. The network is a partner of the EU NEIGHBOURS east programme. (euneighbourseast.eu)

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