

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

## Opposition Leader and TI-Georgia Executive Assaulted in Batumi

Giorgi Gakharia, leader of the opposition For Georgia party and former Prime Minister, and Zviad Koridze, journalist and Transparency International (TI) Georgia member, were both physically assaulted on the night of January 15 at the Sheraton Hotel in Batumi. Though the incidents occurred separately, both have sparked accusations of politically motivated violence.

Gakharia sustained a broken nose and a concussion after being assaulted, reportedly by Georgian Dream (GD) MP Dimitri Samkharadze, Adjara's Deputy Minister of Economy and Finance Giorgi Manvelidze, and several other GD MPs, according to journalist Gela Mtvlishvili. The For Georgia party described the assault as a "coordinated group attack orchestrated by Ivanishvili's regime."

Natia Mezvrishvili, a senior leader of the For Georgia party, directly blamed Bidzina Ivanishvili, citing his earlier threats against Gakharia, who left GD in 2021 to form the opposition party.

Batumi Sheraton manager Megi Zghenti confirmed the existence of video recordings of both assaults and stated that the hotel is ready to hand them over



to the relevant authorities. However, Zghenti noted that the police, who are conducting the in-

vestigation, have not yet retrieved the recordings.

Zghenti also clarified that the

hotel keeps surveillance footage for about a month. Addressing questions about a brief video

aired by Imedi TV, Zghenti explained that the footage did not come from the Sheraton's cameras but was filmed by someone at the scene.

In a separate incident at the same venue, Zviad Koridze was also attacked, reportedly by the same individuals involved in Gakharia's assault. Koridze, who sustained an eye injury, was hospitalized. TI-Georgia condemned the assault as a deliberate act of retaliation against the civil sector and called for an immediate investigation.

The Ministry of Interior has launched an investigation under Article 126 of the Criminal Code, which pertains to violence causing physical pain without resulting in deliberate injury, in Gakharia's case. However, it remains unclear whether a separate investigation has been opened for the attack on Koridze.

The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics and TI-Georgia have strongly condemned the incidents, demanding accountability and justice for the attacks. The Charter emphasized the need for the Ministry of Internal Affairs to act swiftly to ensure that those responsible face the full extent of the law.



## Journalist Mzia Amaglobeli Alleges Mistreatment by Police Official

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Mzia Amaglobeli, the detained founder of Batumelebi and Netgazeti, has accused Irakli Dgebuadze, head of the Batumi Division of the Adjara Police Department, of abusive behavior during her arrest and detention.

According to Nona Kurdovanidze, chairman of the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Amaglobeli claims that Dgebuadze spat in her face and attempted to assault her multiple times at the police station. Kurdovanidze conveyed these allegations at a press conference following her visit to Amaglobeli at the Rustavi #5 detention facility.

"Mzia Amaglobeli provided

detailed information to the Special Investigation Service about the mistreatment she endured in the courtyard of the police station and inside the station building," said Kurdovanidze.

Following her arrest, Amaglobeli alleges that Dgebuadze verbally assaulted her and attempted to physically assault her several times at the police station. Other officers intervened and restrained Dgebuadze, removing him from the room. However, Dgebuadze reportedly re-entered the room multiple times, continuing his aggressive behavior. On one occasion, he allegedly spat in her face.

Amaglobeli also claims that,

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8446; Euro - 2.9322; GBP - 3.4778; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7727; Swiss Franc - 3.1198

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under Dgebuadze's orders, she was denied access to water and the toilet for a prolonged period.

Kurdovanidze emphasized the seriousness of the allegations, calling for the immediate sus-

pension of Dgebuadze's authority. She urged the Special Investigation Service to thoroughly investigate the claims of mistreatment and to apply the appropriate legal qualifications to the case.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Prosecutor's Office Rules Out Multiple Voting in 2024 Elections After Investigation



The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia held a briefing to update the public on its investigation into alleged fraud in the 2024 parliamentary elections. The agency detailed the steps taken to address claims of election manipulation and reaffirmed its commitment to transparency.

The Prosecutor's Office stated that various investigative experiments and actions have been conducted, concluding that it is theoretically impossible for a single voter to cast multiple votes at different or the same polling stations.

A separate investigation into the mark-

ing fluid used during the elections revealed that it retains its luminescence under ultraviolet light for at least 12 hours, even after repeated handwashing. The agency reported that approximately

400 individuals have been interviewed in connection with the case. However, many of those who had publicly voiced concerns about alleged fraud either refused to cooperate with the investigation or requested to be interviewed in court.

The Prosecutor's Office claimed that most witnesses were unable to provide substantive information and urged individuals with relevant evidence to come forward.

In a statement during the briefing, the Prosecutor's Office encouraged anyone with evidence of election fraud to cooperate with the investigation.

### Mamuka Mdinardze Defends Dito Samkharadze's Actions Against Gakharia as 'Reciprocal'



Mamuka Mdinardze, executive secretary of the Georgian Dream party, responded to footage aired by TV Imedi allegedly showing GD MP Dimitri Samkharadze physically assaulting opposition leader Giorgi Gakharia at the Sheraton Hotel in Batumi. Mdinardze suggested that Samkharadze's actions were "reciprocal" and questioned the sequence of events.

"We need to establish who attacked whom. There was a verbal dispute, and the footage suggests Gakharia struck

Dimitri Samkharadze in the face with a glass. Was it or wasn't it? Was Dimitri Samkharadze's reaction reciprocal or not? If it was, how is that an attack?" Mdinardze stated.

Mdinardze further speculated about the nature of the altercation, asking whether Gakharia's actions could be considered an attempt to attack a state political official.

"This could fall under a rather serious charge, but this is just my guess. In other words, he attacked Dito Samkharadze; physical violence came first from his side. The only thing that remains is to determine if it was politically motivated."

Mdinardze concluded by stating that Samkharadze would provide his account during the investigation.

### Ukraine Donor Platform confirms continued strong support for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction

The 12<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting of the Ukraine Donor Platform took place on 14 January, bringing together senior representatives of Platform members and international financial institutions in an online format.

The meeting was co-chaired by European Commission Direc-

tor-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Gert Jan Koopman, Ukraine's Minister of Finance, Sergii Marchenko, and the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia, Maria Longi. On the Ukrainian side, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, and Deputy Prime Minister for Restoration of Ukraine and Minister for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development Oleksiy Kuleba, also participated.

Prime Minister Shmyhal confirmed Ukraine's commitment to reforms, notably in the context of its EU accession process.

Participants reiterated the Platform's unwavering support for Ukraine and its commitment to continue working to help Ukraine meet its immediate and

long-term financing needs.

The Steering Committee underscored the importance of the G7 agreement of 25 October 2024 to deliver approximately US\$50 billion in Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) loans to Ukraine. As the EU contribution to these loans, the Commission is making available an exceptional MFA loan of Euro18.1 billion, from which it made a first disbursement to Ukraine of Euro3 billion on 10 January 2025. The rest of the funding will be disbursed over the course of 2025.

The Commission also updated the Steering Committee on payments under the Ukraine Plan, the first pillar of the Ukraine Facility. At the end of 2024, the Commission disbursed nearly Euro4.1 billion to Ukraine,

bringing the total disbursed to the Ukrainian budget under the Facility so far to Euro16.1 billion. In 2025, disbursements of Euro12.5 billion are planned, subject to a favourable assessment of all relevant policy conditions.

During the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Kuleba presented Ukraine's top recovery and reconstruction priorities for 2025: energy, heating, water supply and sanitation, housing and transport.

"Delivering effective support for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction will remain a key priority for the Platform in 2025 and donors will further strengthen their engagement on this track," the European Commission said in a press release. In this context, the Ukraine In-

vestment Framework (UIF), according to the Commission, is "actively supporting Ukraine's key priorities, particularly in the municipal and energy sectors, with numerous projects already under implementation".

The Ukraine Donor Platform (initially called the Multi-Agency Donor Coordination Platform for Ukraine) was launched on 26 January 2023 to coordinate efforts to address Ukraine's financing needs, both in the short to medium-term. The Platform's Steering Committee brings together high-level officials from Ukraine, the EU, and the G7 countries as permanent members.

The next Steering Committee meeting is expected to take place in April 2025.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

## Weather

### Thursday, January 16

Day ☁️ Cloudy  
High: 12°C

Night ☁️ Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 4°C

### Friday, January 17

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy  
High: 8°C

Night ☁️ Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 3°C

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