

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association Calls for Immediate Action on Mzia Amaghlobeli's Health Amid Hunger Strike

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), has raised urgent concerns over the health condition of Mzia Amaghlobeli, a journalist who has been on a hunger strike for 19 days. In an issued statement, GYLA criticized the Georgian Dream for their failure to provide any updates on Amaghlobeli's condition and for restricting access to her medical records, which her defense team has yet to receive.

The GYLA has called on the Public Defender's Office to urgently monitor Amaghlobeli's health, assess her medical needs, and ensure that the full medical documentation related to her condition is made available to the organization. The growing international outcry over the journalist's arrest and deteriorating health further underscores the gravity of the situation.

Despite Georgian legislation outlining specific guidelines for the care of individuals on hunger strikes, the GYLA expressed concerns about the adequacy of the care being provided to Amaghlobeli. The statement pointed to the journalist's chronic health issues, particularly severe vision problems, and the risk of additional complica-

კაჟა სეჟონის

მზია ამაღლობელის
ჯანმრთელობის
მდგომარეობა მძიმდება,
ხოლო შესაბამისი
უწყებები სამედიცინო
დოკუმენტაციას არ
გვანვდიან

საქართველოს
საპროტესტო
ინიციატივა
სამხრეთი

tions as a result of her extended hunger strike. There are also reports from her lawyers that Amaghlobeli is already struggling to cover the distance required to meet with her legal counsel, further highlighting the deteriorating state of her health.

In response, the GYLA has issued several key demands to the Public Defender's Office. The organization is calling for continuous and daily monitoring of Amaghlobeli's health, as well as a full disclosure of the medical documentation held by the Public Defender. Additionally, the GYLA has urged the office to seek out all relevant medical records from the Penitentiary Service and ensure that these documents are shared with the organization.

One of the primary concerns raised by the GYLA is whether Amaghlobeli's current care complies with the requirements established by Georgian law. The watchdog has requested that the Public Defender's Office assess whether the prison facility is adequately equipped to provide the necessary medical care, and whether Amaghlobeli requires multidisciplinary care to address her health needs. Furthermore, the GYLA has called for daily visits by a medical professional or a representative to monitor the journalist's health and well-being.

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Tensions surrounding the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) reached a boiling point during a live Board of Trustees meeting, as journalists and protesters criticized the station's coverage of key events, particularly its handling of pro-EU protests and the case of imprisoned journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli. The meeting, which was broadcast live, became a platform for dissent as journalists publicly called out the broadcaster's pro-government bias and lack of editorial independence.

The criticisms were voiced most strongly by GPB journalists Vasil-Ivanov Chikovani and Nino Zautashvili. Both journalists have been vocal in their discontent with the station's editorial practices, particularly its failure to provide adequate coverage of the pro-EU protests and Amaghlobeli's hunger strike. Initially denied entry to the meeting, Chikovani and Zautashvili, along with a group of protesters, were eventually allowed to attend after some

board members insisted on their participation.

Once inside, Chikovani accused GPB Board Chairman Vasil Maglaperidze of having undue influence over editorial decisions, questioning how a figure with strong ties to the ruling Georgian Dream party could maintain objectivity in his role. Chikovani pointed out that Maglaperidze, who is a former deputy chair of the party, had been present in the newsroom during protests when police clashed with demonstrators. He argued that this further exemplified the station's pro-government stance. "The people's voice is not being heard," Chikovani stated, emphasizing the lack of impartiality in GPB's coverage of critical issues.

The journalists also expressed concerns about the broadcaster's coverage of Amaghlobeli's case. While GPB had briefly mentioned her imprisonment, Chikovani and Zautashvili argued that the station should have provided more detailed analysis, given Amaghlobeli's role as a

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8761; Euro - 2.9929; GBP - 3.5776; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9468; Swiss Franc - 3.1693

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prominent journalist and her involvement in the pro-EU protests. Chikovani took to the air during the evening news broadcast, repeatedly expressing solidarity with Amaglobeli and

demanding more in-depth coverage, saying, "Solidarity and freedom to Mzia Amaglobeli" multiple times throughout the segment.

In response to the criticisms, GPB Director General Tinatin Berdzenishvili defended the

station's editorial decisions, condemning the backlash as part of a "distorted campaign" against the broadcaster. She reiterated that despite mounting pressure, she had no intention of resigning, firmly standing by the station's editorial choices.

Maglaperidze also addressed the accusations, admitting he had appeared on air during the protests but denying any involvement in editorial decisions.

The division within the GPB's leadership became clearer as board members issued conflicting statements. A group of board members, including Maglaperidze, accused activists and political figures of using the pro-EU protests to push for control over the broadcaster's editorial policies. They also claimed that protesters had been using intimidation tactics against GPB

employees, framing the calls for management change as an attempt to stifle press freedom.

However, three board members—Lasha Tugushi, Zaza Abashidze, and Lika Basilaia-Shavgulidze—distanced themselves from this stance. In their own statement, they criticized the GPB for failing to address public grievances and for not fulfilling its legal obligation to provide objective, balanced reporting. They expressed concern about the broadcaster's lack of transparency, programming priorities, and internal policies.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Embassies Express Concern Over Journalist's Hunger Strike and Media Freedom in Georgia

mediate release and a review of her case. The coalition echoed concerns raised by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, who deemed her detention unjustified.

"This is another worrying example of

Kobakhidze Meets with Pashinyan During a Visit to Armenia

on Economic Cooperation convened under the chairmanship of both Prime Ministers. The discussions focused on expanding trade and economic relations, with



Joint Statement of 14 embassies of the Media Freedom Coalition in Georgia

Members of the Media Freedom Coalition are extremely concerned about the welfare of Mzia Amaglobeli on day 19 of her hunger strike.

As the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights has said, her pre-trial detention is unjustified. This is another worrying example of the intimidation of journalists in Georgia, restricting media freedom and freedom of expression. Mzia must be released immediately and her case reviewed. At the same time, we remain concerned there has still been no police officer suspended or charged following systematic violence against protesters.

We recall the MFC statement of 20 December and call on the Georgian authorities to ensure the rights of journalists who have suffered excessive use of force while reporting on the protests.

Signed

Embassies of Austria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ukraine



The embassies of 14 countries, as members of the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC), have issued a joint statement condemning the continued pre-trial detention of journalist Mzia Amaglobeli, who is now on the 19th day of a hunger strike.

The statement, signed by the embassies of Austria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine, calls for Amaglobeli's im-

the intimidation of journalists in Georgia, restricting media freedom and freedom of expression," the statement reads.

The embassies also criticized the Georgian authorities for failing to take action against law enforcement officers involved in systematic violence against protesters. They reiterated concerns raised in the MFC's December 20 statement, urging Georgian authorities to uphold the rights of journalists and ensure accountability for excessive use of force during protests.

On January 30, Georgian Dream Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, accompanied by a delegation, arrived in Armenia for an official visit. During his meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, both leaders reaffirmed the strategic importance of relations between the two countries and emphasized the value of high-level dialogue and cooperation across various sectors.

As part of the visit, the Georgian-Armenian Intergovernmental Commission

both sides highlighting the importance of fully utilizing the existing potential. The upcoming 14th session of the commission is expected to further deepen economic ties.

The talks also addressed regional security and the ongoing peace process. According to a press release issued by the Georgian government, Kobakhidze expressed Georgia's readiness to facilitate dialogue and contribute to stability in the region.

European Commission proposes tariffs on remaining agricultural products and fertilisers from Russia and Belarus

The European Commission yesterday adopted a proposal to



impose tariffs on a number of agricultural products from Russia and Belarus, and on certain nitrogen-based fertilisers.

The agricultural products affected by the new tariffs constitute 15% of agricultural imports from Russia in 2023 that had not yet been subject to increased tariffs. Once adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, all agricultural imports from Russia would be the subject of EU tariffs.

The proposal aims to reduce

the EU dependencies on imports from Russia and Belarus and support the growth of domestic production and the EU's fertiliser industry.

The tariffs are also expected to negatively impact Russian export revenues impacting Russia's ability to wage its war of aggression against Ukraine.

The Commission's proposal will now be considered by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, January 31

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 11°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: -1°C

Saturday, February 1

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 11°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: -1°C

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