

Court Rejects Petition for Release of Amaghlobeli, GYLA Denounces Decision

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) has condemned the Batumi City Court's recent decision to reject a petition seeking the release of journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli, director of the Batumelebi/Netgazeti publication, from pre-trial detention. Judge Levan Kolbaia declared the petition inadmissible, prompting GYLA to call the decision "illegal and unfounded."

"There is no justification for her imprisonment," the GYLA stated, underscoring the lack of evidence supporting Amaghlobeli's continued detention. The organization claimed that the court's actions reflect a broader pattern of "illegality" within the Georgian judicial system.

Amaghlobeli is facing charges under Article 353 Prima of the Georgian Criminal Code, which pertains to assaulting a police officer. The charges stem from an incident in which Amaghlobeli was arrested. However, GYLA asserts that the police falsified the arrest report, initially claiming Amaghlobeli was arrested for verbally abusing an officer. Video footage of the arrest, however, clearly contradicts this claim, showing Amaghlobeli remaining silent and compliant throughout the

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მზია ამაღლობელის უკანონო პატიმრობის გაუქმების განხილვაზე მოსამართლე ლ. ყოლბაიას უარი ქუთაისის სააპელაციო სასამართლოში გასაჩივრდა

საპროცესო კანონის დარღვევა

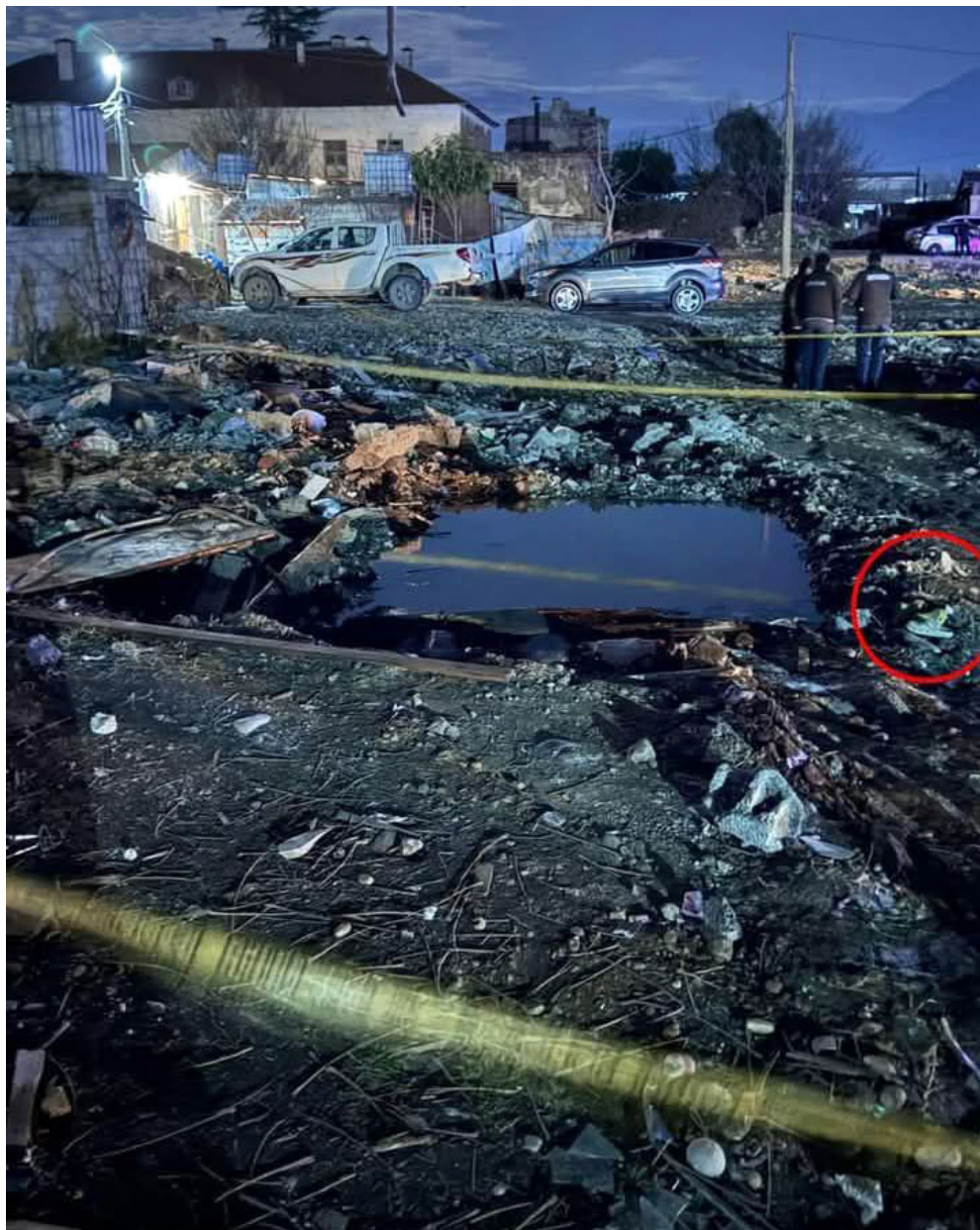
encounter.

Despite the new evidence, the Kutaisi Court of Appeals upheld her detention in a ruling on January 21. In light of the latest decision from Batumi City Court, GYLA has announced it will once again appeal to the Court of Appeals. They argue that Amaghlobeli's detention serves no legitimate purpose and is an act of political retribution for her journalistic activities and civic engagement.

"The court was obliged to consider the new evidence and grant the defense's motion," GYLA's statement said. According to them, Amaghlobeli's detention is part of an ongoing political persecution and a punishment for her role as an independent journalist.

"Therefore, the court's latest illegal decision regarding Mzia Amaghlobeli further proves that her imprisonment is intended as an exemplary punishment and retribution for her journalistic work and active civic stance.

With the complaint filed today, the Georgian justice system is once again presented with an opportunity to end the political persecution of Mzia Amaghlobeli and to bring an end to her unlawful imprisonment," the statement reads.



Two Children Die in Unsecured Construction Area in Batumi

By Liza Mchedlidze

Two children, aged five and seven, died on February 15 after falling into an unfenced, water-filled pit in Batumi's "Dream City" district, where construction work is underway. The children were missing for several hours before being found and taken to a clinic, but doctors were unable to save them.

"Dream City" is home to socially vulnerable families, with around 2,000 households demanding better living conditions for years. The Georgian Dream government began construction in the area in 2020.

Just a week before the tragedy, on February 8, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and Adjara's regional leader, Tornike Rizhvadze, held a ceremony to mark the start of the second phase of construction.

Batumi City Council Chairman Irakli Tavdgiridze visited the site and denied that construction safety standards had been violated. He also claimed the incident did not occur on a construction site.

Tensions escalated when journalists from Adjara Times and Batumelebi tried

to report from the scene. Several individuals confronted them aggressively, with one striking journalist Jaba Ananidze's hand. The group also attempted to downplay the incident, insisting, "No one fell into a construction trench."

Adjara's Minister of Finance and Economy, Jaba Putkaradze, echoed Tavdgiridze's statements, claiming, "This is not a construction site – this is a preparatory area for construction work," and called for an end to "speculation."

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) argues that the deaths cannot be dismissed as an accident, citing state inaction and a failure to uphold the right to life.

"According to numerous locals, the area was neither fenced off nor had warning signs to alert adults and children of the danger. This failure confirms the state's violation of its positive obligations regarding the right to life," GYLA stated.

The organization also condemned the obstruction of journalists at the scene, emphasizing that the state has a duty to ensure public safety and protect lives, including addressing hazards in public spaces and securing construction sites.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Two Georgian Citizens Illegally Detained by Russian Forces Near Dirbi

Upon receiving the report, the SSSG activated the EU Monitoring Mission's "hotline" and informed the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) as well as international partners.



Russian occupying forces illegally detained two Georgian citizens near the village of Dirbi in Kareli municipality, the State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG)

The agency stated that all available mechanisms have been mobilized to secure the swift release of the detained individuals.

"The responsibility for all destructive acts committed in the occupied territories of Georgia, as well as along the occupation line, lies with the occupying power," the SSSG emphasized.

Georgia Condemns Abkhazia's So-Called Presidential Elections

MFA stressed that the so-called elections "grossly violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders," are "unlawful," and "have no legal effect as they contradict the fundamental principles and norms of international law." The ministry urged the international community to "properly assess and re-



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Georgia has condemned the so-called presidential elections in Russian-occupied Abkhazia, calling on the international community to respond.

In a statement on February 15, the MFA stressed that the so-called elections "grossly violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders," are "unlawful," and "have no legal effect as they contradict the fundamental principles and norms of international law." The ministry urged the international community to "properly assess and re-

"Equality Corner" opens in Gori Art House

On February 13, within a collaborative initiative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Georgia Country Office and the Intelekti Publishing - "Let the Freedom Read", an "Equality Corner" was launched at the Gori Art House.

During the event, the Art House received a donation of over one hundred books on equality, women's and girls' empowerment, tolerance, and human rights.

The "Equality Corner" was officially opened by the editor-in-chief of the Intelekti Publishing, Zviad Kvaratskhelia, and writer Iva Pezuashvili, who engaged with the youth in discussions on the significance of gender equality, as well as the empowerment and rights of women and girls.

The UNFPA has been opening "Equality Corners" in different regions of Georgia since 2018 in partnership with various organizations. "Equality Corners" are not merely libraries but a



dynamic space where young people can convene to read, discuss social issues, exchange ideas, and engage in meaningful dialogues.

This initiative seeks to equip schools, local libraries, and youth community spaces with modern literature, enabling young people to engage with texts that promote the values of equality, tolerance, and freedom.

Through the distribution of these books, adolescents are provided the opportunity to enhance their

awareness of universal human values. The Gori "Equality Corner", which is the twenty-fifth in Georgia, was launched in collaboration with the Intelekti Publishing, within the UN Joint Programme "For Gender Equality", supported by Sweden.

Three more "Equality Corners" will open in Zugdidi, Batumi, and Kutaisi, providing young people with the opportunity to explore diverse perspectives, ideas, and narratives.

Photo credit: Gela Bedianashvili/ UNFPA Georgia

Weather

Monday, February 17

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 14°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 2°C

Tuesday, February 18

Day Overcast

High: 8°C

Night Overcast

Low: 1°C

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