

Complaint Filed Over Attack on Salome Zourabichvili at Tbilisi Airport

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Eka Beselia, the representative of Georgia's 5th President Salome Zourabichvili, has submitted an official complaint to the Prosecutor's Office, requesting an investigation into the attack on Zourabichvili at Tbilisi Airport. The incident, which occurred upon her arrival, involved unknown individuals throwing eggs at her.

According to Beselia, Zourabichvili sustained injuries as a result of the attack, raising concerns about the severity of the incident. "This is a serious crime, defined in the Criminal Code as organized violence by a group," Beselia stated, emphasizing that the attack was politically motivated. "It becomes even more severe when it happens due to political views and position."

Beselia further suggested that objects other than eggs may have been thrown, potentially increasing the level of harm. "Whatever you throw at a person's face can be dangerous," she said, adding that there appeared to be a coordinated effort behind the attack. She also accused authorities of failing to intervene. "Security was waiting. They tried to find the police,



and the president told them to call the police to maintain order. But there was no one to call. This confirms that the space was cleared in advance so that the attackers could act unhindered."

On February 18, Zourabichvili called for an official investigation, stating that the attack was not only an act of violence but a "pre-organized" incident. She also claimed that members of the ruling Georgian Dream party later justified the attack.

"This means that the state is not being respected," Zourabichvili declared, adding, "In this case, I am a symbol of what the Georgian Dream is fighting against – the Georgian state, Georgian traditions, Georgian courtesy... the image of Georgia in the world."

She described the attack as an act of weakness by the ruling party. "All they can do is take repressive measures and throw eggs... If that's not a sign of weakness, I don't know what is," she said. Zourabichvili also questioned the Georgian Dream's ability to lead, stating, "They can't govern Georgia anymore. They don't know how to govern the country anymore."

SJC: Arrest of TV Pirveli Cameraman Part of Broader Trend of Arbitrary Detentions by Georgian Dream

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Social Justice Center (SJC) has strongly condemned the arrest of TV Pirveli cameraman Lasha Jioshvili, describing it as part of a broader trend of arbitrary detentions used by the Georgian Dream government to suppress peaceful protests.

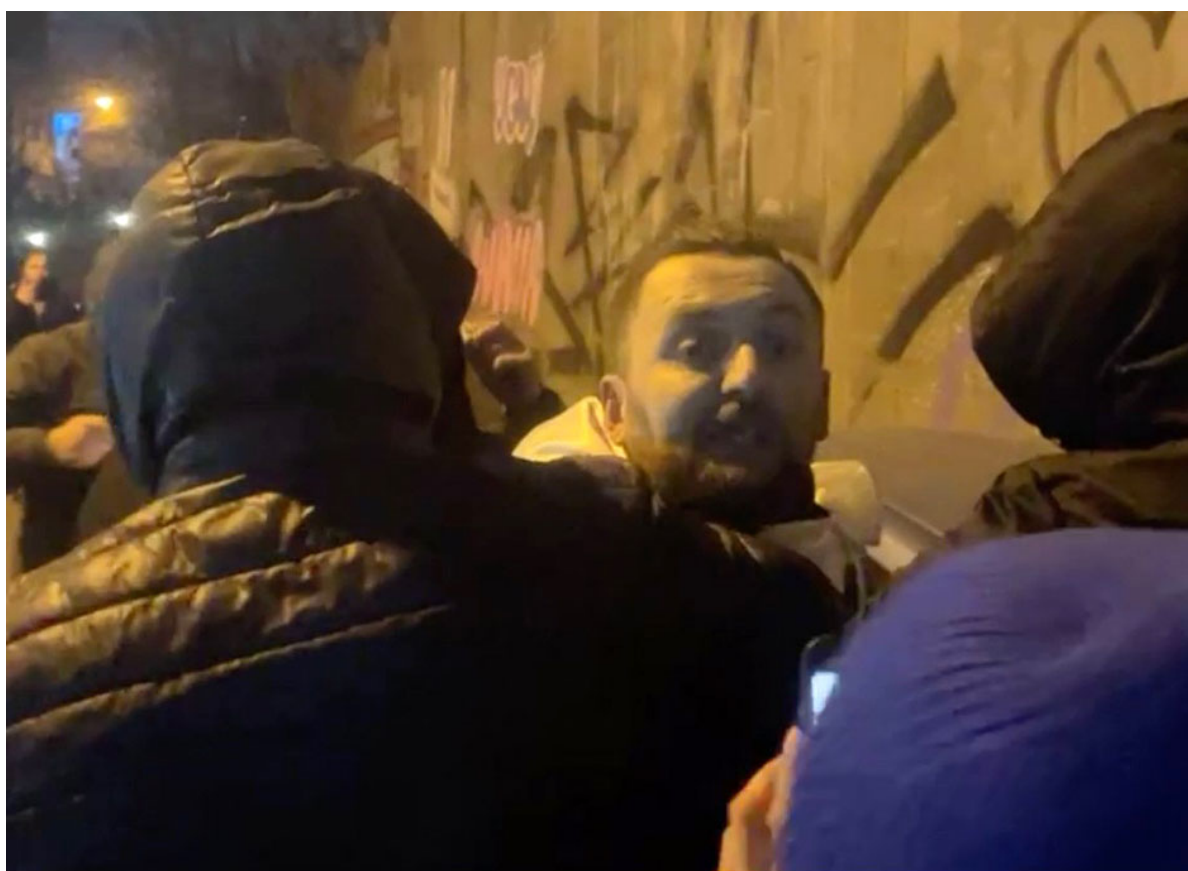
Jioshvili was forcibly detained by masked individuals after a protest on Rustaveli Avenue on February 18. He was later charged with disobeying the police under Article 173 of the Administrative Code. Footage of the incident shows that the officers did not identify themselves or explain the reason for his detention, raising concerns over the legality of the action.

"The detainee was not given the opportunity to contact his lawyer before being taken to the department. Law enforcement officers threatened him and used disproportionate physical force against him, leaving him with bruises," the SJC stated.

Jioshvili was reportedly holding a banner referencing a protest performance on Bidzina Ivanishvili's birthday, and the SJC believes that this may have been the catalyst for his arrest. A video recording captured Jioshvili saying, "They're putting something in my pocket," suggesting that law enforcement may have attempted to plant evidence.

The SJC also criticized the use of unidentifiable law enforcement officers, stating, "It is particularly problematic that none of the detaining persons could be visually identified as law enforcement officers." They argue that such tactics are designed to intimidate protesters rather than ensure public safety.

In their statement, the SJC called for Jioshvili's immediate release and for an investigation into the use of excessive force during his arrest. "We call on the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Special Investigation Service to respond to the allegations and ensure justice," the organization said.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Lavrov Says 3+3 Format Remains Open to Georgia



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has reiterated that Georgia is welcome to join the 3+3 regional cooperation format, according to Russian state media outlet Tass.

“From the very beginning, everyone agreed that we have a 3+3 format, and we understand the difficulties and nuances of Georgia’s position, but there will

always be a place for Georgian representatives at meetings in this format. We have confirmed to the Georgian side that the door is open and the chair is in place,”

Lavrov stated.

The 3+3 format includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, along with Russia, Turkey, and Iran. However, Georgia has so far refused to participate, citing concerns over Russian influence.

Lavrov also commented on Georgia’s current leadership, saying it acts in the country’s national interests. He further claimed that the previous U.S. adminis-

tration had sought to undermine the 3+3 format by pushing for an alternative 3+1 framework.

Georgian Students Urge EU for Support in Video Message



A group of Georgian students has released a video message to European Union representatives, warning that “If Georgia falls, Europe will fall too.” The students call for effective assistance from the EU, highlighting increasing repression against citizens who speak out against the government.

“Members of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, representatives of the EU – we, the students of Georgia, are addressing you today because we

believe that it is time for our voices to be heard, not only as citizens but also as the future of our country,” the message states.

The students describe a deteriorating situation in Georgia, where activists, journalists, and artists are allegedly facing arrests, torture, and persecution.

They emphasize that “every day, without real support from Europe, is a threat to our lives.”

They stress that the EU’s response will have real consequences, impacting those who are imprisoned or silenced. “In these difficult times, we must face challenges together. We want to put our demands on the agenda and show that our future is important to you,” the students declare, concluding with the call: “Together we will win!”

The 13th Award Ceremony of the EU Prize for Journalism 2024 was held on 17 February in Tbilisi. The EU Ambassador in Georgia, Pawel Herczynski, awarded the winners in seven categories.

“Today is not the time for celebration, yet it is precisely in moments like these that we must stand firm in our duty to honour and defend independent journalism,” said Ambassador Herczynski. “We are all witnessing the rapid and alarming deterioration of press freedom in Georgia. Journalists are being intimidated, beaten, and imprisoned. And for what crime? For sharing the truth. For being the voice of those who have been silenced. For exposing human rights violations. For acting as one of the pillars of democracy. This cannot be happening in a country that aspires to join the European Union.”

He also expressed concern about the health of journalist

Winners of the ‘EU Prize for Journalism 2024’ announced in Georgia



Mzia Amaglobeli, who has been on hunger strike for 37 days. Herczynski called her strike “an act of extraordinary bravery and determination” and said that she became “a symbol of journalistic courage, and of the relentless fight for justice”.

The winners and finalists of the EU Prize for Journalism 2024 are:

Best story in print or online media:

Salome Chaduneli- Radio Liberty (winner);

Nastasia Arabuli- Radio Liberty (honourable mention);

Maia Tsiklauri – Indigo Magazine (honourable mention);

Temo Inasaridze – sknews.ge (Special mention).

Best feature story in broadcast or online media:

Davit Tamazashvili, Mariam Nikuradze – Chai Khana Media (winner);

Salome Gogokhia – Formula TV (honourable mention);

Sopiko Vasadze – Radio Liberty (honourable mention);

Nino Artmeladze – Online Media Batumelebi (special mention).

Best investigative story / feature in print, online or broadcast media:

Tamar Gelashvili – Studio Monitor (winner);

Maka Chikhladze – TV Pirveli (honourable mention);

Katie Tutberidze – Studio Monitor (honourable mention);

Tamta Dolenjashvili – TV Pirveli (special mention).

Best blog, opinion or column in print, online or broadcast media:

Giorgi Baskhajauri- Media Aprili (winner);

Nino Lomadze – Indigo Magazine (honourable mention);

Tamar Babuadze – Indigo Magazine (honourable mention);

Nikoloz Tabatadze – Indigo Magazine (special mention).

The most innovative and original piece of work in print, broadcast or online media:

Maya Metskhvarishvili – Studio Monitor (winner);

Beka Beradze – Radio Liberty

(honourable mention);

Elene Khachapuridze, Lika Antadze – Chai Khana (Honourable mention);

Nino Kheladze – TOK TV (special mention).

Best documentary photo reflecting EU values:

Dato Koridze – Radio Liberty (winner);

Aleksandre Keshelashvili – Publika (honourable mention);

Manana Kveliashvili – Online Media Batumelebi (honourable mention);

Mindia Gabadze – Publika (special mention).

Best student work in print, online or broadcast media:

Tamar Mchedlidze – OC Media (winner);

Saba Sordia – Indigo Magazine (honourable mention);

Nana Kokhodze – Publika.ge (honourable mention);

Levan Abashidze – pastel.com (special mention).

The next edition of the EU Prize for Journalism will be announced on 3 May, 2025.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, February 20

Day Overcast
High: 3°C

Night Rain / Snow
Low: -2°C

Friday, February 21

Day Overcast
High: 2°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -5°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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