

Release Georgian journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli!

6 February 2025

On 11 January 2025, Georgian journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli was first detained when she posted a banner calling for a nationwide strike on the fence outside the Batumi police department in an act of solidarity with her colleague, who was previously detained for the same action. Shortly after her release, she was detained again for slapping a Batumi Police Chief who had insulted her. Despite the circumstances, the Georgian Prosecutor's Office has charged her with 'attacking a police officer,' a criminal offence that carries a prison sentence of 4 to 7 years.

'The charges brought against me are the result of repressive, traitorous, violent processes repressing free speech and expression, which has been taking hold on our lives for the past year in the shape of dictatorship. I will not abide by this regime's agenda. I will go on hunger strike. Freedom is more valuable than my life,' – Amaghlobeli wrote in an open letter on 20 January.

Amaghlobeli's lawyer has stressed that her action does not constitute a criminal offence as it has not caused any harm that would require criminal liability.

Furthermore, the lawyer has reiterated that since her detention, she has been subjected to degrading treatment. She was verbally assaulted by the same police chief, who also attempted to physically harm her several times at the police station. He also spat in her face and Amaghlobeli was denied access to water and toilet facilities.

Following her detention, Amaghlobeli has been on hunger strike since 14 of January, and her health is rapidly deteriorating. Georgian courts have refused to grant her release before her trial.

EaP CSF Steering Committee shares concerns that Amaghlobeli's pre-trial detention is not a preventative measure but rather an attempt to intimidate media representatives, activists and civil society at large.

Since the adoption of the Russian-style law ‘on transparency of foreign influence’, Georgian civil sector has faced unprecedented pressure from the ruling Georgian Dream Party. The latest example of such pressure, which EaP CSF condemns, includes the publication by Georgian MP Dimitri Samkharadze of a list of Georgian civil society figures with an insulting caption. This once again, highlights the Georgian government’s animosity towards the civil society representatives.

We therefore call on:

The Georgian authorities

- To immediately release Mzia Amaghlobeli and promptly investigate any alleged mistreatment sustained while in detention;
- To unconditionally release all journalist and activists who have been arbitrarily arrested or detained;
- To end its systematic crackdown on civil society and independent media, and investigate recent cases of ill-treatment, harassment and physical attacks against activists, journalists, and opposition figures;
- To uphold democratic rights and freedoms, and align its actions with the Georgian people’s aspiration for European integration;

The European Union and Member States

- To unequivocally condemn the arrest and mistreatment of Mzia Amaghlobeli;
- To intensify political and financial support for Georgian civil society, media and human rights defenders;
- To continue to acknowledge and support the European aspirations of the Georgian people;
- To provide immediate emergency support to Georgian civil society and media, including core operational support, while exploring alternative ways of engaging with and supporting them;

Georgian Civil Society Organisations and Media

- To continue to stand up for their rights and freedoms and speak up against punitive measures used by the authorities;
- To seek international support and protection to ensure that journalists and CSOs are safeguarded against state harassment or restrictions.

The Donor Community

- To take into account the fragile state of Georgian media and CSOs caused by the domestic and international factors, and strengthen them in a flexible manner;

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