

URGENT ACTION

JUSTICE FOR JOURNALIST MZIA AMAGHLOBELI

Prominent Georgian journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli joined the peaceful protests in Batumi on 11 January 2025, and was arrested twice. She is now in detention and standing trial for slapping Batumi Police Chief Irakli Dgebuadze. There is publicly available video footage of numerous violations of human rights of protesters by police on the day, including one in which Irakli Dgebuadze makes explicit and sexualized threats against Mzia Amaghlobeli. Several former detainees have accused him of violence inside the police station, yet he remains in command of Batumi police, while Mzia Amaghlobeli faces a lengthy prison sentence.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE MODEL LETTER

Koka Katsitadze
Head of the Special Investigation Service
№09 M. Asatiani St.
Tbilisi, Georgia

Dear Mr. Katsitadze,

I am writing to demand justice for the jailed journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli, and for police officers to be brought to account for the use of unlawful force and other violations against peaceful protesters in Batumi on 11-12 January 2025, specifically the Chief of Batumi Police Irakli Dgebuadze, and also in connection with allegations of torture or other ill-treatment against detainees by police.

As you will be well aware, Mzia Amaghlobeli is standing trial for allegedly using violence against Irakli Dgebuadze, and faces prison if found guilty. There is video footage in which she is seen slapping him on the face, against the background of abusive actions by the police force in the streets of Batumi against peaceful protesters, and following Mzia Amaghlobeli's earlier, manifestly arbitrary arrest. There is also footage of Irakli Dgebuadze swearing and insulting the journalist, and numerous allegations of him using or attempting to use violence against detained peaceful protesters, including Mzia Amaghlobeli, inside the police station.

I am concerned that Mzia Amaghlobeli was remanded in custody following a swift hearing in which the judge quickly accepted the prosecution's claims that she could abscond, reoffend and influence the investigation if granted bail. She was refused adequate medical examination and treatment for the injuries she alleged the police inflicted during her arrest. During her trial, which soon followed, the judge refused to admit any of her defence's submissions, around 50 in total. Only three of the defence's witnesses were questioned, and the court refused to summon for cross-examination any of the police officers whose testimonies against Mzia Amaghlobeli it admitted. The court of appeal did the same, but agreed to admit the widely circulated, publicly available videos featuring her during the protest on 11 January 2025.

By contrast, neither police commander Irakli Dgebuadze nor any other police officers have been suspended in their duties despite the video evidence and other credible allegations of very serious crimes against them. The investigation nominally opened by the Special Investigation Service into these allegations has not identified any suspects, nor formally recognized any of the complainants as victims, nor publicly reported any progress in all this time. This not only delays or denies accountability for the police's alleged abuses, but is also in stark contrast to the prosecution of Mzia Amaghlobeli, which appears to be being conducted in a manner that is politically motivated and intended to punish her for opposition to police abuses and to send a signal to other protesters.

I call on you to ensure that Irakli Dgebuadze and all police officers involved in arbitrary arrests and alleged ill-treatment of peaceful protesters, are immediately suspended in their duties until all allegations against them, including but not only those from 11-12 January 2025, are promptly, impartially and effectively investigated, and necessary disciplinary, administrative or criminal proceedings enacted as appropriate, in compliance with their fair trial rights.

I demand full respect for Mzia Amaghlobeli's and all Georgian protesters' human rights, including the right to a fair trial, to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mzia Amaghlobeli, a prominent Georgian journalist and co-founder of media outlets *Batumelebi* and *Netgazeti*, was arrested twice on 11 January 2025 during peaceful protests in the city of Batumi in south-western Georgia. Her first arrest was arbitrary and related to her attempting to post a sticker on a building calling for a nationwide protest. Numerous other peaceful protesters were also arbitrarily arrested alongside Mzia Amaghlobeli. After her release, she rejoined the ongoing protest, and in the midst of ongoing arbitrary arrests of peaceful protesters, her verbal altercation with Batumi Police Chief Irakli Dgebuadze led to her slapping him on the cheek. She was immediately detained. In publicly available video footage, Irakli Dgebuadze and other officers are heard threatening and swearing at her while she is being led away. Mzia Amaghlobeli later told her lawyer that Irakli Dgebuadze and other officers continued verbally abusing her in custody, and that he attempted to assault her physically but was stopped by his colleagues. For three hours, she was denied access to her lawyer, and to water and washroom facilities.

Mzia Amaghlobeli was remanded in custody on the charge of “attacking a police officer” (Article 351(1) of the Criminal Code). On 14 January, in a swift hearing, the judge refused her bail. Mzia Amaghlobeli went on a hunger strike for 38 days in protest against the violation of her human rights.

The Special Investigation Service (SIS, a stand-alone agency responsible for investigating alleged crimes by law enforcement officers) was informed about the incident on 12 January, and on 15 January Mzia Amaghlobeli provided a detailed report of her ill-treatment by police. There are conflicting reports as to when the SIS formally launched an investigation into the 11-12 January events in Batumi. Mzia Amaghlobeli’s defence allege the SIS failed to do so until 17-18 January, when it came under pressure from a local rights watchdog, and backdated its records to 13 January. At least three other protesters arrested in Batumi on 11 January, Malkhaz Iremadze, Temur Katamadze and Genri Dolidze, have reported beatings and other ill-treatment by Irakli Dgebuadze and other law enforcement officers while in detention. At the time of writing, the SIS has not reported any progress in its investigation, nor recognized either Mzia Amaghlobeli or any other complainants as victims of the alleged crimes by police.

The details of Mzia Amaghlobeli’s arrest, alleged ill-treatment in detention, and trial, give rise to strong concerns over the likely motivation for her prosecution, and, contrasted with the apparent impunity enjoyed by the police, demonstrate her and other protesters’ discriminatory treatment by the criminal justice system in Georgia. Her case also highlights broader concerns about politically motivated prosecutions, suppression of dissent, and gender-based reprisals against those exercising their right to protest in Georgia. The insults and abuse directed at her by senior police officials, particularly Irakli Dgebuadze, demonstrate a clear attempt to degrade and intimidate her as a woman. Her treatment is not an isolated incident but reflects a broader pattern in which women in Georgia who challenge authority, particularly in political and protest contexts, are targeted with additional hostility and abuse.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Georgian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: October 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mzia Amaghlobeli (She/her)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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