

URGENT ACTION

JUSTICE FOR TORTURED GEORGIAN PROTESTER

Activist Saba Skhvitardze was arrested on 5 December 2024 after taking part in anti-government protests in Georgia. He was interrogated without his lawyer and tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in detention. He remains detained pending trial and deprived of his liberty, facing a sentence of up to 11 years, while his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment against the authorities have not been effectively investigated.

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

Giorgi Gabitashvili

Prosecutor General of Georgia
24 Gorgasali Street, 0134 Tbilisi, Georgia
Email: mla@pog.gov.ge

Dear Mr. Gabitashvili,

I am writing to express grave concern regarding the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of activist Saba Skhvitardze, who was arrested on 5 December 2024 after participating in an anti-government protest. He was beaten by police officers and denied access to legal counsel and medical care.

His arrest and trial have been marred with violations of fair trial guarantees. Police officers failed to explain the reasons for his arrest and refused to activate their body cameras as required by Georgian law. Officers also confiscated both Saba's and his father's mobile phones to prevent him from contacting his lawyer and he was then interrogated without his lawyer being present. His whereabouts were only disclosed to his family and lawyer following his interrogation, five hours later.

Saba reported that, while in custody, he was threatened with rape and forced to sign a "confession" stating he assaulted a police officer. When he refused, masked officers beat him violently, striking his head and ribs continuously for about 10 minutes, attempting to break his arm and causing him to intermittently lose consciousness. Police officers then mocked and ignored his plea for access to a lawyer and medical assistance despite him having injuries that caused him severe pain and nausea.

Despite the visible injuries that Saba displayed at the pre-trial hearing the following day, the prosecution refused to initiate an investigation into his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. The authorities only initiated an investigation days later after an independent medical examination confirmed that his injuries were consistent with torture. Nevertheless, the judge ordered him to be remanded in detention pending trial without providing any justification for the necessity and proportionality of his decision.

Saba Skhvitardze is one of hundreds of people in Georgia who have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated by law enforcement officials during peaceful protests. He remains held at a high security prison, facing a sentence of up to eleven years while his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment have not been effectively investigated.

I urge you to ensure a prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigation into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of Saba Skhvitardze and to bring all those responsible to justice in fair trials. I also call on you to ensure that Saba is tried in accordance with international standards for a fair trial and to ensure that any statements or other evidence obtained as a result of torture or other ill-treatment is excluded in all proceedings except those brought against suspected perpetrators of such abuse.

Yours Sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Saba Skhvitardze, an activist and a member of the opposition political party *Akhali*, has been publicly critical of the government and actively involved in anti-government and pro-European protests in Georgia since 2024. Saba Skhvitardze was arrested on the night of 5 December 2024 after attending an opposition party meeting. He is being accused of assaulting a police officer with a baton, causing head injuries. The incident reportedly occurred as a group of masked individuals confronted activists and politicians following their meeting. One of the masked men slapped a woman activist after she attempted to remove his hood to identify him. Clashes ensued as Saba Skhvitardze and other activists intervened to restrain and confront the masked man, who was later identified as a police officer. The police made no arrests during the confrontation but arrested Saba Skhvitardze the following day.

Saba Skhvitardze's arrest and subsequent treatment appears to be retaliatory, aimed at punishing him for participating in protests and creating a wider chilling effect to deter others from joining the protests. From the outset, his case has been marked by unlawful and retaliatory actions by the state authorities, consistent with a broader pattern of using the criminal justice system to suppress dissent.

Saba was reportedly stopped without an arrest warrant, denied an explanation for his arrest, and his whereabouts were concealed for over five hours. Police officers confiscated the phones of Saba and his father, effectively preventing documentation of the arrest and obstructing access to legal representation. The refusal to register the arrest and the denial of access to legal counsel further question the legality of Saba's arrest and point to deliberate attempts to isolate and intimidate him.

While in custody, Saba was beaten and threatened for having allegedly assaulted a police officer. He was pressured to sign a "confession" and denied access to medical care despite his injuries and severe pain. A forensic report confirmed that his injuries were consistent with torture, but his formal recognition by the authorities as a victim of torture has been delayed and there has been no progress into the investigation of his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment after more than six months.

Saba Skhvitardze is being held in a high-security prison typically reserved for convicted individuals and those serving life sentences. He is being held in solitary confinement without meaningful human contact, in conditions that may also amount to torture or other ill-treatment that further point to the punitive nature of his detention.

His trial has also been marred by serious violations of safeguards for a fair trial: despite presenting visible injuries and a detailed account of torture and other ill-treatment at his initial court appearance. The judge disregarded these claims and ordered his pre-trial detention following a summary hearing without duly assessing the risks or deliberating on proportionality, necessity, or alternative measures. The court also excluded the presence of journalists and members of the public before delivering its decision.

The court also failed to address significant inconsistencies in the prosecution, including in witness statements, police protocols and medical reports. Saba's defence has also complained about their inability to properly cross-examine law enforcement witnesses who have repeatedly evaded questions in an attempt to undermine the defence's ability to challenge the evidence.

While Saba remains in prison and faces criminal prosecution for allegedly inflicting injuries to a police officer, no law enforcement officials have been identified, investigated or held accountable for the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. The treatment of Saba Skhvitardze exemplifies systemic violations of the right to a fair trial, including the use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment to prosecute protesters as a tool for punishment and intimidation. His case reflects a broader pattern of abusing the criminal justice system in Georgia, where law enforcement officers accused of using force unlawfully, including to torture and otherwise ill-treat protesters, enjoy impunity while protesters are tortured, prosecuted and detained in unfair trials.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Georgian, English
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 25 December 2025
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Saba Skhvitardze (He/Him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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