

Ex-president Saakashvili to temporarily stay at Gori Military Hospital, Special Penitentiary Service Says

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Special Penitentiary Service of Georgia stated yesterday that the third president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili would temporarily stay in Gori Military Hospital. According to the penitentiary service, doctors decided to discharge Saakashvili from the hospital on December 27, but he did not obey the request of the staff regarding his transfer to Rustavi #12 facility.

The agency notes that following a nervous breakdown, Saakashvili was ob-

served with blood pressure fluctuation and, therefore, the penitentiary service temporarily postponed enforcement of the measure. According to the Minister of Justice of Georgia, Rati Bregadze, since Saakashvili's treatment is already over, he will be transferred to the Rustavi N12 Prison following consultations with the medical personnel.

Saakashvili's private physician Nikoloz Kipshidze said his patient considers a hunger strike as the only tool to continue the political fight. However, he noted that the ex-president would not survive an-



The third president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, who is now a citizen of Ukraine, was arrested in Tbilisi on October 1.

other hunger strike. Kipshidze further claimed the Gori Hospital is not a suitable place to treat Mikheil Saakashvili in his current health.

According to the Justice Minister, if the former President goes on hunger strike again at the Rustavi Prison and his health is endangered, according to the protocol, he will be transferred to the medical facility in the Gldani prison instead of the Gori hospital.

Bregadze notes that if there is a possibility of deterioration of health, inmates are generally transferred to the Gldani hospital, noting that "there are no excep-

tions to the law and the protocol of an ordinary prisoner will apply to Saakashvili."

The third president of Georgia, now a citizen of Ukraine, after being in political exile for eight years, was arrested in Tbilisi on October 1, ahead of the October 2 municipal elections. In 2018, the Georgian court convicted him in absentia on two counts of abuse of power and sentenced him to six years in prison. He is also facing five additional charges, including illegal seizure of property, embezzlement, illegal rally dispersal, and illegal border crossing.



Georgian Justice Minister Rati Bregadze stated that Saakashvili's medical treatment ended, but he would stay at the Gori Military hospital at the decision of the Special Penitentiary Service.

Ombudsman's Representatives and Saakashvili's Doctors Denied to Visit Ex-President

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

The representative of the Public Defender and the doctors of the council were not allowed to go to the Gori Military Hospital with Mikheil Saakashvili.

According to the ombudsman's representative, Saba Brachveli, their goal was to obtain information about the ex-president's treatment, as well as possible mistreatment. However, they were not allowed to do so.

"We requested a meeting with the doctor on duty and he was not met either. We only met with the neurologist on duty in front of the cameras. In these circumstances, we would not start talking to him about confidential and medical information. The neurologist on duty has no contact with patient Saakashvili," said Brachveli.

Brachveli stated that according to the law, the representatives of the Public Defender have the right to meet a person deprived of liberty at any time in a closed institution.



Saba Brachveli

"Obstructing our entry here is a violation of the Organic Law on the Public Defender. This must be followed by a legal response. Also, I think it is necessary that such a fact does not happen again," says Brachveli.

On December 27, Mikheil Saakashvili said that an attempt was made to remove him from the Gori military hospital, which he resisted.

Brachveli says that the ex-president may have been mistreated, but today refuses to visit him raises doubts whether something similar has happened again.

"Our obstruction raises doubts as to whether he has been mistreated repeatedly, or whether the patient's condition has been aggravated, or whether there is any other restriction of which the public is not aware," stated Brachveli.

On November 19, after a 50-day hunger strike, Mikheil Saakashvili was transferred from the Gldani 18th Prison Medical Center to the Gori Military Hospital, where his rehabilitation process began.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0899; Euro - 3.5009; GBP - 4.1559; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.1986; Swiss Franc - 3.3718

Mandatory Committees Support the Bill to Abolish Inspector's Service



Since 2019, the Parliamentary Oversight Body for Personal Data Protection has been tasked with investigating crimes committed by officials, including with the participation of the MPs who are the authors of the current bill.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

On December 25, it became known that the deputies of the parliamentary majority had prepared a bill, according to which the position of State Inspector and the Office of the State Inspector will be abolished and a special Investigation Service and Personal Data Protection Service will be established instead. The legislative package was presented to the Parliamentary Bureau on December 28.

With the legislative changes initiated by the Georgian Dream MPs, the current staff of the Office of the Inspector will be dismissed from March 1, and labor contracts will be terminated. The bill also restricts their possibility of legal dispute. GD leaders assure that the staff will not be dismissed, but transferred.

The draft law on the state inspector prepared by the Georgian Dream was supported by the Procedural and Human Rights Committee in the first reading.

As Londa Toloraia said, she and the staff of the State Inspector's Service learned

through the media that the Parliament of Georgia had initiated such a bill and the billing process was completely conspiratorial

"The time of the initiation of the bill and the process of its expedited consideration somehow coincided with the pre-New Year period of the absence of the vast majority of representatives of the international and diplomatic corps in Georgia and my personal inspector's decree. This makes me think that this is not accidental," Toloraia announced on December 25.

Toloraia said that even though the service had encountered many obstacles - had and still has insufficient legal guarantees of independence and ineffective leverage of activities, insufficient financial and human resources, as well as the problem of cooperation from agencies, the service team, with conscientious work, was able to form an independent state agency and gain trust.

She stressed that the work of the service, 2 years after its launch, is positively assessed by both international and local organizations.

Londa Toloraia responds to the challenges facing the service, according to her, back in 2019, Agency submitted to Parliament a new law on international data protection following international standards, which has

been pending for more than 2 years.

In 2021, they presented to Parliament a detailed and critical report on the activities of 2020, which, for the first time in history, was not heard by Parliament.

On December 24, 2021, they submitted a legislative proposal to the Parliament, the aim of which is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Service

and to eliminate obstacles in the process of investigating official crimes. Parliament has not expressed interest in this proposal either.

Instead of encouraging the Georgian Parliament to further strengthen its service, a very dangerous process of expedited abolition of service began.

The reason given for the abolition of the State Inspector's Service is that the combination of two functions in the Service - personal data protection and investigative function - causes conflicts of interest and poses a threat to data protection. It was also noted that this completes the recommendation issued by the non-governmental sector in 2018 to establish an independent investigative service.

The Parliament of Georgia did not see the problem of incompatibility of interests in 2018 and did not consider this recommendation of NGOs as a weighty argument. As Toloraia says it became relevant only today when the Office of the State Inspector was established as an independent state institution. According to her, the bill does not reflect any of the recommendations issued by international organizations, the non-governmental sector, and does not address any of the challenges mentioned in the 2020 report to the Parliament of Georgia.

The parliamentary opposition demanded suspension of the consideration of the draft law on the

state inspector. Besides that, a total of 17 NGOs have called on the Georgian government to 'stop attacks on independent institutions. They stressed the importance of the involvement of civil society and representatives of the Inspector's Service in the process of working on the bill, adding that it 'demonstrates the government's intent to influence an independent institution.

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan has stated that 'there is no need to rush' with adopting a bill proposing to replace the State Inspector's Service with two new agencies, calling on the Georgian parliament to slow down the process. She called the new initiative of replacing the State's Inspector's Service with two agencies 'concerning,' adding that the 'process of developing this law is really of the greatest concern.'

The Geneva Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights responded to a parliamentary bill to abolish the Office of the State Inspector.

"We are deeply concerned about the draft law on the abolition of the independent institution - the State Inspector's Office. The service has a key role to play in preventing torture and protecting privacy. We urge you to step back from this initiative and ensure the independence of the national human rights mechanisms," the UN office said in a statement posted on Twitter.



Under the new draft, the Special Investigation Service will be authorized to investigate the offenses committed by the authorities, while the Personal Data Protection Service will be responsible to monitor personal data procession

Weather

Wednesday, December 29

Day Partly Cloudy High: 11°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: -1°C

Thursday, December 30

Day Partly Cloudy High: 9°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: -1°C

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