

State Inspector Appeals Law Abolishing State Inspector's Service in Constitutional Court

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian State Inspector Londa Toloraia has filed a constitutional complaint with the Constitutional Court appealing the law abolishing the State Inspector's Service and replacing it with two new agencies.

Toloraia said her appeal requested an immediate suspension of the appealed norms before the Constitutional Court makes a final decision on the case, claiming that the enactment of the disputed norms will lead to irreparable consequences for the State Inspector. According to the legislation, adopted on December 30, 2021, the State Inspector's Service will be abolished from March 2022 and the new agencies will be formed instead.

According to the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Toloraia was appointed State Inspector by the Parliament of Georgia on July 3, 2019, for a term of 6 years, however, under the disputed norm the authority of Toloraia was terminated after 2 years and 8 months. GYLA notes that the new law contravened Article 25 of Georgia's Constitution, according to which "every citizen of Georgia has the right to hold any public position if they meet the requirements established by law."

According to the Constitutional Court of Georgia, to terminate the term of office of state officials, it is necessary to have an increased public interest following the requirements of the Constitution. As Toloraia notes, the lawmakers will have



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**STATE
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to present proof of legitimate public interest in restricting Article 25 of the Constitution.

The Parliament of Georgia named the conflict of interests as the basis for the expedited dismissal of the State Inspector. According to Toloraia, the MPs have not also proved that there was indeed a conflict of interest in the State Inspector having assumed both investigative and data privacy protection mandates and even if there was such a legitimate reason, Toloraia believes that she should have been allowed to continue working as head of the Personal Data Protection Service or the Special Investigation Service until her term ends.

The ruling party claims that the replacement of the State Inspector's Service with two new agencies will strengthen the body and add functions to it, noting that the authority of the State Inspector's Service 'has been broadly expanded'. The selection commission for choosing the chairpersons of the newly established bodies has been formed and began working on Monday.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

A young man was physically assaulted by a police officer at the Isani metro station in Tbilisi last Sunday. The leaked footage, taken by a citizen, shows law enforcement following the boy up the escalator. The accompanying person explains that the 17-year old has a disability, does not understand or can answer

their questions. Despite this, as it can be seen from the footage, the citizen was allegedly taken to the bailiff's room, during which one of the policemen physically

Two Policemen Detained for Physically Assaulting Deaf Minor

assaulted the young man.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has stated the video footage taken in the Tbilisi metro, stating that the MIA condemns any

kind of violence, any violent action by a police officer that may violate human rights is categorically unacceptable to the agency.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0720; Euro - 3.4661; GBP - 4.1358; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.9081; Swiss Franc - 3.3402

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Two Policemen Detained for Physically Assaulting Deaf Minor

The MIA has arrested 2 police officers involved in a physical assault on the person with disabilities, charging them for the violent attack. Giorgi Gamezardashvili, Deputy Head of the State Inspector's Office, said two officers had been arrested following the prompt investigation announced by the ministry late on Monday after the footage aired on television channels and was posted on social media.

"On January 24, 2022, based on the information spread through media, the State Inspector's Office immediately launched an investigation. Witnesses were questioned, including the victim, who was questioned in the presence of a psychologist," Gamezardashvili said.

The investigators said the disabled minor and his brother had been approached by the police in the Isani subway station on Sunday evening, with the 17-year-old taken to the police staff room at the station, where one of the officers repeatedly punched the minor in the head. The assault continued despite the juvenile indicating he was disabled and could

not understand the officer addressing him throughout the arrest and the subsequent attack. It was noted that the deaf adolescent has received injuries to his head and face as a result of the assault.

The assaulting officer has been charged with 'degrading or inhuman treatment by an official against a minor, through abuse of official authority, with his colleague facing the charge of abuse of official authority after failing to report the assault. The crime, under Article 144.3 (2a, 2b, 2g) of the Criminal Code is punishable by a prison term of 5 to 10 years, and possibly with deprivation of the right to hold any office or carry out activities for up to 5 years and with restriction of the rights to carry weapons.

The offense, under Article 332 (1) of the Criminal Code is punishable by a fine, house arrest for 6 months to 2 years, or by imprisonment for up to 3 years, with

deprivation of the right to hold office or to carry out activities for up to 3 years.

Vice President of the Deaf Union Maia Metonidze states that the juvenile beaten by a policeman in the metro is being examined.

Metonidze notes that a sign language translator is involved in the case.

"This is a cause of great outrage in our community with a very great emotional background. We try to provide as much information as possible to these people. As you know, the environment is not fully adapted, ie it is difficult for all members of society to obtain information. In terms of awareness-raising, training has been conducted and important issues have been resolved, but there is a constant need for awareness-raising, as you know that the responsible persons in the public institutions and various institutions are changing accordingly.

A protest action 'No To the Militia' took place yesterday in Ortichala, in front of the building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, organized by the members of the party 'Droa' and the representatives of the youth organization 'Lelo'. They protesting against the violence in the metro station. According to them, the incident is not a single case and indicates a problem in the system.

The incident also spurred a protest rally outside the ruling Georgian Dream party headquarters and the MIA building on January 24.

The local watchdog, Social Justice Center, stated that the attack 'cannot be an isolated incident,' adding that such practices demonstrate the closed system and the lacking accountability of the Interior Ministry. According to them, the political elite has yet to carry out substantial reforms aimed at preventing police brutality.



The police officer who detained the young person on the subway escalator escorted him to a police room at the station, where another policeman allegedly attacked the victim.



There were several confrontations between the police and the protesters.

Georgian women push for inclusive and gender-equal policies

The Women Councillors Forum pledges to pay greater heed to women's participation in public life

Tbilisi. 25 January 2022 – Women's representation in municipal councils grew almost two-fold as a result of the 2021 local elections in Georgia, reaching a historical 24 percent. In the aftermath of elections, the Women Councillors Forum uniting over 490 women members of municipal councils gathered at an annual conference to discuss the new opportunities brought on by the increased number of women in elective self-government bodies and specific steps to be taken to

bring women's perspective to the local and national agenda.

The event brought together women members of local councils from all regions of Georgia, and representatives from the Georgian Government, Parliament, political parties, civil society and international organizations. It discussed women's role in advancing local politics as well as cooperation between the Parliament's Gender Equality Council and the municipal Gender Equality Councils.

The forum was organized by the Municipal Service Providers' Association (MSPA) of Georgia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was supported by the Government of Sweden and the Inter-

national Republican Institute.

"Women politicians are bringing a range of experiences and perspectives to the table – be it on social services, poverty reduction, employment or protection of the environment. We hope that newly elected women will lead on those issues to deliver great results for the Georgian society," said UNDP Deputy Head **Anna Chernyshova**.

"The 2021 elections were a significant step towards more women in local politics. I hope this trend continues in future elections at all levels. It is equally important that the voices and perspectives of women politicians are heard in the public debate and impact the political decision-making on the same

terms as for male politicians. Sweden has for over two decades been supporting women's rights and empowerment in Georgia, including in politics, and will continue to do so. Gender-equal and inclusive participation in politics means a stronger democracy and better policies in all areas and is something that the Georgian voters are increasingly calling for. It also contributes to Georgia's European integration," noted Ambassador of Sweden to Georgia **Ulrik Tidestroem**.

The other speakers at the Forum included **Nino Tsilosani**, Chair of the Parliamentary Gender Equality Council; **Niko Tatulashvili**, Advisor to the

Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights Issues; **Mzia Giorgobiani**, Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia; and **John DiPirro**, IRI Resident Program Director.

The Women Councillors' Forum was established in 2013, with support from UNDP and Sweden. It serves as a cooperation platform encouraging Georgian women to become more active in public life and local decision-making. The work of the Forum responds to the aspirations of almost two-thirds of Georgia's population that, according to the UNDP's survey, think that greater involvement of women in politics would benefit the country.

Weather

Wednesday, January 26

Day Cloudy High: 5°C
Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 0°C

Thursday, January 27

Day Cloudy High: 7°C
Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 0°C

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Festival Night Serenades Wins Successful International Project Nomination at Georgian Brand Day

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

International festival Night Serenades founded by world-famous Georgian violinist Liana Issakadze has been awarded at Georgian Brand Day. The awards ceremony was held at the Sheraton Grand Tbilisi Metechi Palace hotel.

Georgian Brand Day is an annual business ceremony that has been reflecting the ongoing processes in the Georgian market for 19 years, representing national brands on every stage of development and boosting their motivation. The winning companies in different nominations were awarded diplomas and medals at the awards ceremony this year.

International festival Night Serenades, organized by the company Art Alliance, won the nomination Successful International Project. The award was received by Nina Tsagareli, the director of the festival and founder of the company Art Alliance. Tsagareli thanked the founder of Georgian Brand Day, Manana Gegidze, stressing that "holding such an event in today's conditions is tantamount to bravery". The director of the festival also

thanked the founder of the Night Serenades Liana Issakadze, the artistic director of the festival, Giorgi Issakadze, the festival's main orchestra 'Georgian Virtuosos,' and the chief conductor of the Orchestra Vakhtang Matchavariani, as well as the supporters of the festival, including state institution, embassies, private companies, and media outlets.

Members of the Konstantine Vardel String Quartet took part in the award ceremony and performed miniatures of Sulkhan Tsintsadze for the audience.

The international festival Night Serenades was founded in 1982 in Georgia's north-western region of Abkhazia at the initiative of renowned Georgian violinist and conductor Liana Issakadze. In 1991, the festival stopped existing, however, 18 years later, in 2009, Night Serenades was brought back to the Georgian seaside town of Batumi. Since 2018, the artistic director of the festival is Giorgi Issakadze, musician and teacher based in Germany, founder and artistic director of Ingolstadt and Munich academies of dance and music.

