

By Liza Mchedlidze

## GYLA Calls for Justice for Mzia Amaglobeli Amid Ongoing Hunger Strike

The Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) has issued a statement regarding Mzia Amaglobeli, the founder of Batumelebi and Netgazeti, who has been on a hunger strike for the 16th consecutive day. GYLA is calling on the Ministry of Justice to immediately make a public statement and provide regular updates on Amaglobeli's health condition during her hunger strike. The organization has also stressed that the prison administration must ensure comprehensive and effective monitoring of her health, in line with a special protocol for such cases.

According to GYLA, Amaglobeli's imprisonment is illegal, and the organization has urged the Prosecutor's Office to terminate the case based on what they describe as "illegal accusations." They are calling for a change in her preventive measure before the court, arguing that Amaglobeli's actions do not involve any criminal offense. Amaglobeli, in a conversation with GYLA's chairman, stated that her hunger strike is not a demand for personal benefits but a protest against injustice. The statement from GYLA also emphasizes that the charges against her are politically motivated and that she is being punished for her work as a journalist, not for any legitimate legal violation.

In addition to addressing the legal situation, GYLA is also appealing to the Special Investigation Service to provide updates on the investigation into Amaglobeli's claims of degrading treatment. The organization is questioning why Irakli Dgebuadze, the Chief of Batumi Police, has not been suspended despite the allegations. GYLA's statement reiterates that the system is targeting Amaglobeli due to her journalistic

კაჟა ხეხოსანი

მზია ამაგლობელის  
სიცოცხლეს საფრთხე  
ემუქრება -  
აუცილებელია  
დაუყოვნებელი  
მოქმედება

activities, which are deemed politically inconvenient, rather than any criminal wrongdoing.

In response to the concerns raised, the

Penitentiary Service issued a statement reassuring the public that Amaglobeli is receiving appropriate medical care. According to the statement, Amaglobeli is

under constant supervision by medical staff, and all necessary medical services required by law are being provided. To ensure her safety, she has been placed in a cell equipped with video surveillance. The prison administration claims that Amaglobeli is receiving "adequate medical care" and that her health is being monitored regularly.

Amaglobeli's lawyer has stated that the journalist intends to continue her hunger strike as long as her body allows it, noting that she is consuming only water. Despite her ongoing hunger strike, her condition is described as stable. According to her lawyer, the initial medical assessments indicate that her condition is normal given the circumstances, although it is clear that her body will face significant challenges due to the extended hunger strike.

Public Defender Levan Ioseliani has also weighed in, confirming that Amaglobeli is still on hunger strike and has no intention of ending it. Ioseliani stated that when he met with Amaglobeli, she expressed her firm stance on continuing the protest. As of now, Ioseliani confirmed that she has not consumed food since January 12, and she is regularly visited by a doctor three times a day for monitoring. He added that Amaglobeli's condition is stable, though he stressed that the hunger strike has undoubtedly put a strain on her body. Since her detention, Amaglobeli has been visited seven times by the Public Defender's office to monitor her situation.

## EU Suspends Visa-Free Travel for Georgian Diplomats and Officials

By Liza Mchedlidze



The Council of the European Union has announced the partial suspension of the EU-Georgia visa facilitation agreement, a move that could require Georgian diplomats and officials to apply for visas when traveling to EU member states.

The decision comes in response to concerns over Georgia's recent legislative and political actions, including the adoption of the controversial "Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence" and a legislative package on "family values and protection of minors." These measures, according to the EU, undermine fundamental rights such as freedom of association, expression, and privacy while fostering discrimination and stigmatization.

The Council also cited violent repression by Georgian authorities against peaceful protesters, opposition politicians, and independent media following the government's decision in November 2024 to postpone EU accession negotiations until 2028.

"These actions breach the fundamental principles on which the facilitation agreement was concluded," the Council stated, adding that they run counter to

the interests of both the EU and its member states.

The suspension will affect Georgian diplomats, government officials, and members of constitutional and supreme courts. Specifically, these individuals will no longer benefit from reduced visa fees, shorter processing times, or fewer documentation requirements when traveling to EU member states that have reinstated visa obligations.

However, Georgian nationals holding ordinary passports will still enjoy visa-free travel to the EU for short stays of up to 90 days within a 180-day period.

Polish Minister of the Interior and Administration Tomasz Siemoniak remarked, "Fundamental rights and democratic values are core principles of EU integration. Officials representing a country that tramples these values should not benefit from easier access to the EU."

The EU-Georgia visa facilitation agreement, effective since March 2011, aimed to streamline visa issuance for Georgian citizens. However, the agreement includes a clause allowing suspension for reasons of public order, national security, or public health.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8808; Euro - 3.0263; GBP - 3.6013; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9733; Swiss Franc - 3.2044

# EU Suspends Visa-Free Travel for Georgian Diplomats and Officials

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In 2017, Georgian nationals were granted visa-free travel to the EU for short stays. Despite this, the current

suspension underscores growing tensions between Georgia and the EU regarding the country's democratic trajectory.

Once the partial suspension takes effect, EU member states may implement

national measures to reintroduce visa requirements for Georgian diplomats and officials holding diplomatic, service, or special passports.

While ordinary Georgian citizens re-

tain their visa-free travel privileges, the suspension marks a significant diplomatic shift, highlighting the EU's growing frustration with Georgia's democratic backsliding and governance challenges.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Gakharia Party Accuses Prosecutor's Office of Deliberately Withholding Key Evidence



The Prosecutor's Office has officially recognized Giorgi Gakharia, leader of the Gakharia For Georgia party, as a victim in relation to an alleged attack in Batumi. Gakharia's party has criticized the investigation process, claiming they were denied access to critical evidence. According to a statement from Gakharia For Georgia, the prosecutor's office refused to allow Gakharia's representative to view important video footage of the attack, stating that the recordings were being sent for further examination. The party claims the prosecutor's office has copies of the foot-

age but has withheld them.

The party argues that victim status was requested to access key case materials, particularly the video evidence, which they consider essential for understanding the attack. When Gakharia's representative arrived in Batumi to re-

view the evidence, they were informed that they could not view it, despite the prosecutor's office having possession of the footage. Furthermore, the party claims that Gakharia's representative was denied access to the interrogation records of a key witness, Zviad Koridze. They also assert that the investigation has made little progress, with only one witness formally questioned nearly two weeks after the attack.

The party suggests that these actions are part of a deliberate effort to obstruct the truth. They accuse the prosecutor's

office of acting under the directives of Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgia's former Prime Minister, to cover up the attack and shield those responsible. They argue that the refusal to release the video evidence reflects an attempt to downplay Ivanishvili's alleged role in orchestrating the attack and to conceal its coordinated nature.

### Georgian Dream Delegation Led by Shalva Papuashvili Visits Hungary



Shalva Papuashvili, Chair of the Georgian Dream Parliament, arrived in Hungary on January 26, leading a delegation for meetings aimed at strengthening bilateral ties. On January 27, he met with László Kövér, Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary. Their discussions centered on inter-parliamentary relations and concluded with the signing of a frame-

work agreement to enhance cooperation and share Hungary's EU integration experience.

During the meeting, Kövér emphasized the strong relationship between Georgia and Hungary, highlighting shared priorities such as sovereignty and common challenges that foster collaboration. Papuashvili expressed gratitude for Hungary's support and reaffirmed Georgia's commitment to achieving EU membership by 2030, with plans to fulfill 90% of its EU Association Agreement obligations by 2028.

Papuashvili described the visit as a significant step in advancing Georgia's European integration efforts. He commended Hungary for its support and expertise as an EU member. During his trip, Papuashvili is also scheduled to meet Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and President Tamás Sulyok to further strengthen cooperation.

### EU extends sanctions against Russia for further six months

The Council of the European Union today renewed the EU restrictive measures in view of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal military aggression against Ukraine for a further six months, until 31 July 2025.

### Weather

Tuesday, January 28

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 9°C

Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: -1°C

Wednesday, January 29

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 11°C

Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: -1°C



published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia  
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze  
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000  
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge  
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli  
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze  
Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili  
Layout Designer, Photographer

These economic measures, first introduced in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea, were significantly expanded following the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

They currently consist of a broad spectrum of sectoral measures, including restrictions on trade, finance, energy, technology and dual-use goods, industry, transport and luxury goods.

They also cover: a ban on the import or transfer of seaborne crude oil and certain petroleum products from Russia to the EU, a de-SWIFTing of several Rus-

sian banks and the suspension of the broadcasting activities and licenses in the European Union of several Kremlin-backed disinformation outlets. Additionally, specific measures enable the EU to counter sanctions circumvention.

"This will continue to deprive Moscow of revenues to finance its war. Russia needs to pay for the damage they are causing," EU High Representative Kaja Kallas wrote on X, commenting on the EU Foreign Ministers' decision.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

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