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# MIKHEIL ZAKAREISHVILI STORY

Mikheil Zakareishvili, a lawyer by education and currently a sports journalist for the website Barcamania.ge, has been accused of petty hooliganism, disobedience to a lawful order of a police officer, and insulting a police officer. Mr. Zakareishvili was arrested on November 30, 2024, during a protest rally held on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi, where he was demonstrating against the anti-European policies of the “Georgian Dream” party. Mr. Zakareishvili attended the rally with his girlfriend. After some time, he escorted her home and then returned to the rally. Approximately 30 minutes after his return, he was detained by law enforcement officers. The rally was calm, with participants peacefully assembled. However, a group of heavily armed law enforcement officers, referred to as “RoboCops,” advanced toward the demonstrators, surrounding them. These officers struck Mr. Zakareishvili, used profanities, and ordered him to move. As a result of the assault, Mr. Zakareishvili sustained an injury to his eye. Following this, the officers reportedly began detaining protesters without providing justification. The detainees were subjected to verbal abuse and were forcibly transported in a vehicle described as a windowless, seatless minibus with no markings identifying it as a police vehicle.

In the detention minibus, Mikheil Zakareishvili was confined with 11 other detainees. While no physical violence occurred inside the vehicle, detainees were subjected to constant threats and psychological intimidation. Phrases such as, "Shut up, or I'll make you regret it." and similar threats were reportedly used by police officers to address the detainees.

The conditions in the detention minibus further exacerbated the situation. The vehicle lacked windows and seats, and the door remained closed for an extended period of approximately one hour. As a result, one of the detainees, who suffered from asthma, began experiencing health complications.



After one hour, a police minibus arrived, and the detainees were transported to the patrol police station on the Kakheti Highway. Upon arrival, they were held in the patrol police garage for an additional hour. During this time, one of the patrol officers displayed aggressive behavior and mocked the detainees, reportedly saying, ""What's that smell in the car? Someone must have peed out of fear." At the station, Mikheil Zakareishvili was questioned regarding the circumstances of his arrest. Following the interrogation, he was transferred to the Gurjaani detention center, where he was held for 48 hours.

During his arrest, Mikheil Zakareishvili was subjected to physical violence, resulting in an injury to his eye. Despite the apparent harm, he was only provided with a cursory visual examination, which did not lead to any further medical intervention or treatment.

An administrative offense report was filed against Mikheil Zakareishvili, citing violations under Articles 166 and 173, Part 1 of the Code of Administrative Offences. His case was heard by Judge Nino Enukidze. Two police officers provided testimony in Mr. Zakareishvili's case; however, neither officer was directly involved in his detention. Mr. Zakareishvili had been apprehended by the so-called "RoboCops" and subsequently handed over to patrol police officers. Notably, one of the testifying officers, Ilia Kenchashvili, struggled to respond to questions during the trial. He appeared unaware of the events that transpired on Rustaveli Avenue that night. When the policeman heard from Mikheil that barricades had been erected, he needed the judge to explain the meaning of the word 'barricade'.

No objective evidence was presented during the proceedings to substantiate the claim that Mikheil Zakareishvili had violated the law. Nonetheless, the judge found Mr. Zakareishvili guilty based solely on the testimony of the police officers and imposed a fine of 2,100 GEL.

According to available information, the Special Investigation Service has initiated an investigation into the potential abuse of official authority. As part of this inquiry, Mr. Zakareishvili was questioned by the Special Investigation Service. In mid-December, a bloody gas mask and jacket were submitted to the investigators as evidence. However, Mr. Zakareishvili has not been informed of any further investigative actions taken by the service.

To date, the Special Investigation Service has not granted Mr. Zakareishvili victim status in the case.