



FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
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Human Rights Hub

GELA MEGRELIDZE STORY

German citizen Gela Megrelidze, a photographer and pianist, has been charged with petty hooliganism and failure to comply with a lawful order of a police officer. He was arrested by officers of the Special Tasks Department (STD) at approximately 00:30 on December 1, 2024, during a demonstration on the steps of the main entrance to Parliament. At the time of his arrest, Mr. Megrelidze attempted to assist another demonstrator who was being forcibly detained by special forces. In response, an officer of the STD struck him in the head from behind, causing him to fall. Immediately thereafter, two additional STD officers forcibly detained him. Following his arrest, Mr. Megrelidze was subjected to physical assault and verbal abuse. With his head lowered, he was led through the so-called 'human cordon,' where he endured repeated physical assaults. The beating primarily targeted his head, face, ribs, and legs. As a result, he sustained a split lip, multiple head wounds, a swollen jaw, and a bruised rib. The assault lasted approximately six to seven minutes. Afterward, Mr. Megrelidze, severely injured, was transferred to the patrol police department. However, upon discovering that he was a German citizen, the authorities released him upon his written commitment to appear in court.

An administrative offense report was issued against Gela Megrelidze under Articles 166 and 173, Part 1 of the Code of Administrative Offences. His case was heard by Judge Lela Tsagareishvili. During the proceedings, the police officers who drafted the report were called as witnesses. However, they neither directly observed Mr. Megrelidze's arrest nor participated in his detention. Initially, they testified that they had personally arrested him. However, upon further questioning, they clarified that Mr. Megrelidze had, in fact, been apprehended by officers of the Special Tasks Department before being transferred to the custody of the patrol police.

During the hearing, the defense questioned the police officers presented as witnesses. However, they were unable to provide substantive answers and instead responded with standardized, pre-prepared statements. Despite this, Judge Lela Tsagareishvili relied entirely on their testimonies, ultimately finding Gela Megrelidze guilty of an administrative offense and imposing a fine of 2,000 GEL.

Another significant detail regarding the arrest of Gela Megrelidze is the handling of his personal belongings. At the time of his arrest, he was in possession of a mobile phone, a camera, camera lenses, and chargers. Following the physical assault and verbal abuse, a STD officer escorted Mr. Megrelidze to the so-called "arrest car," where the officer took possession of his belongings and proceeded to take a photograph using his own phone. Subsequently, the officer confiscated Mr. Megrelidze's mobile phone, chargers, camera, and camera lenses, returning only his identification documents. It was only after this that the STD officer transferred Mr. Megrelidze into the custody of the patrol police.

Subsequently, the location of Gela Megrelidze's mobile phone was determined through a location-based tracking application. The phone was found in a pawnshop in the city of Gori. When journalists visited the pawnshop to investigate the matter, a confrontation ensued between them and the shop's owner.

Gela Megrelidze filed a complaint with the Special Investigation Service regarding the allegation of mistreatment he suffered at the hands of police officers during his arrest. In response, the Investigation Service contacted him and requested photographs documenting his injuries following his release from the patrol police station. Mr. Megrelidze submitted the requested photographs and provided a formal testimony.

However, to date, he has not been granted victim status.