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Human Rights Hub

# SANDRO BUKIA STORY

Sandro Bukia, a student at the University of Georgia, was charged with petty hooliganism, disobeying a lawful order of a police officer, and insulting a police officer. He was arrested on December 7, 2024, in the presence of his mother at Republic Square.

On December 6, Sandro attended a pro-European demonstration alongside his mother, Tamta Kitia, near the Parliament building. After 01:00, he decided to leave the demonstration and proceeded towards the Rustaveli metro station. Other demonstrators were also in the vicinity. While Sandro and his mother were near the wine shop "Khareba," a special forces unit was deployed near the Radisson Hotel. At that time, an unidentified individual directed profanities at the special forces unit before fleeing. Shortly thereafter, special forces officers advanced toward Sandro. Unaware of any wrongdoing and not expecting to be apprehended, he did not attempt to escape. Upon approaching him, the officers accused him of using offensive language. Before he could respond, additional officers arrived, forcibly restrained him by his hands and feet, lifted him off the ground, and transported him toward the Radisson Hotel, where the unit was stationed. His mother pleaded with the officers to release him and not to use force, citing Sandro's epilepsy, but her appeals were ignored.

Before placing him in a special forces vehicle, the officers removed his hat and, upon seeing his dyed blond hair, began to physically assault and ridicule him. At the special forces minivan, he was ordered to stand beside the vehicle, subjected to a search, and had his personal belongings confiscated. The officers persistently accused him of using profane language toward them. Sandro was unable to provide any further response due to his severe distress. The detainee's head was forcefully slammed against the vehicle twice, causing him to fall to the ground. Approximately five special forces officers then proceeded to kick him, particularly targeting his head. Following the assault, they continued to mock him over his hair color. Subsequently, Sandro was placed in the minivan, where a patrol police officer handcuffed him. Shortly thereafter, three additional detainees, who had also been beaten, were brought in. The detainees were later transferred to patrol police vehicles and taken to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) police station on the Kakheti Highway.



Sandro was released from police custody within a few hours upon signing a written acknowledgment. His family immediately transported him to a medical facility, where he was diagnosed with superficial head trauma, a concussion, superficial chest trauma, and bruises on his abdomen, back, pelvis, hip, and thigh.

An administrative offense report was filed against Sandro Bukia under Articles 166 and 173, Part 1, of the Code of Administrative Offences. His case was adjudicated by Judge Nino Enukidze. Two police officers testified, though neither was involved in his arrest. No neutral evidence was presented to substantiate the allegations against him. The police officers' testimonies were vague and inconsistent.

In his defense, Sandro's legal representatives submitted written and video evidence, his medical records, and footage of his arrest. His mother, Tamila Kitia, also testified, providing a detailed and accurate account of the circumstances surrounding his arrest.

Despite the presented evidence demonstrating the use of excessive force against Sandro and refuting the accusations against him, the judge found him guilty under Article 173 of the Code of Administrative Offenses, issuing a verbal reprimand while terminating the case under Article 166.

The Special Investigation Service initiated an inquiry into potential abuses committed against individuals dispersed during the protest rallies that commenced on November 28, 2024. On December 20, 2024, Sandro Bukia was formally questioned by the Special Investigation Service in the presence of his legal counsel. He provided detailed testimony regarding the mistreatment, physical violence, and confiscation of his belongings. Furthermore, he consented to the forensic examination of his medical records. As a result, Sandro was granted victim status.

According to the available information, the actions of the involved police officers, in addition to exceeding their authority, may constitute torture, inhumane, or degrading treatment in violation of legal and human rights standards.