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# WIESTE DE GEYTER STORY

Wieste De Geyter, a Belgian citizen and social media expert residing in Georgia on a residence permit since 2021, has been charged with non-compliance with the demand of a law enforcement officer and petty hooliganism.

Mr. De Geyter was arrested on December 7 during the dispersal of a pro-European protest. Notably, he was not participating in the rally at the time of his arrest. According to available information, Mr. De Geyter arrived near Republic Square with his friends at a moment when representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) were pursuing and detaining protest participants. Prior to his detention, Mr. De Geyter was exiting a minibus when he observed the MIA officers dispersing the rally. He proceeded to move toward the sidewalk and was heading toward a McDonald's restaurant near Rustaveli Metro Station. At that exact moment, approximately 5-6 riot police officers reportedly approached and forcibly detained him. The special forces had no lawful grounds for his arrest and, acting arbitrarily, employed physical force to place him in the police's so-called 'detention vehicle' – a minivan.

During the arrest, law enforcement officers reportedly used disproportionate force against Mr. De Geyter. While inside the detention vehicle, he was subjected to physical violence, specifically targeted to avoid leaving visible injuries on his face. As a result, Mr. De Geyter sustained injuries to his body, and his clothing became bloodstained. An investigator from the Special Investigation Service also questioned him concerning the aforementioned incident while he was detained at the detention center. The physical violence ceased once the officers identified Mr. De Geyter as a citizen of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Following his arrest, Mr. De Geyter was transferred to the Avchala Temporary Detention Center, where he was held in custody for 48 hours. On December 9, upon his release, he was approached by representatives of the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who subsequently summoned him for questioning at their department.



An administrative offense report was initiated against Mr. De Geyter, alleging violations under Articles 166 and 173, Part 1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses. Judge Koba Chagunava presided over his hearing on December 12, 2024.

During the court hearing, two police officers were called as witnesses. Both testified that they had arrested Mr. De Geyter. However, neither officer was involved in the arrest. As a result, their testimonies during the hearing were significantly contradictory. The police witnesses testified that Mr. De Geyter had been using offensive language and insults in Georgian. However, it is a fact that Mr. De Geyter neither speaks nor understands the Georgian language. Moreover, no corroborative evidence was presented during the proceedings to support the allegations or to substantiate the commission of any offense by Mr. De Geyter.

The defense submitted video footage of Mr. De Geyter's arrest to the court, which directly contradicted and undermined the testimony of the police witnesses. The footage provided objective evidence that Mr. De Geyter had not committed any criminal offense. Judge Koba Chagunava partially dismissed the administrative offense case against Mr. De Geyter, specifically regarding Article 166 of the Code of Administrative Offenses, but found him in violation of Article 173. As a result, he was issued a verbal reprimand. To date, Judge Koba Chagunava has not written or signed the reasoned decision in Mr. De Geyter's case. The defense has formally requested the court for the case materials and the written reasoned decision.

According to available information, the Special Investigation Service has not initiated an investigation into the incident despite having visited Mr. De Geyter at the temporary detention center and being informed of the allegations of mistreatment. Furthermore, the state's response to the detainee involved punitive and repressive measures, including the denial of his re-entry into Georgia.

The victim, Mr. De Geyter, traveled to Belgium on December 22, 2024, to celebrate the Christmas holidays. Upon his return on December 30, 2024, patrol police officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs refused him entry into Georgia and returned him to Belgium. The stated grounds for refusal were categorized as "other cases as provided by the legislation."

However, Mr. De Geyter was not given a clear explanation for the denial of entry. There is reasonable suspicion that the refusal of entry was connected to the ongoing administrative proceedings against him and his proximity to the protest rally. Mr. De Geyter resides in Georgia with his wife under a valid residence permit. The decision to deny him entry raises serious concerns regarding the legality of the ongoing legal proceedings and the validity of the grounds for the refusal.

An appeal against the decision to deny his entry into Georgia was filed with a higher administrative authority on December 31, 2024.