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# SERGI BARAMIDZE STORY

Sergi Baramidze, a professional cameraman employed by the "Main Channel," stands accused of two charges: noncompliance with a lawful directive issued by a law enforcement officer and the verbal insult of a law enforcement officer (offences as stipulated under Article 173 of the Code of Administrative Offences). As of this date, judicial proceedings concerning these allegations have not commenced.

Mr. Baramidze was arrested on November 19, 2024, on Melikishvili Avenue, in the vicinity of Tbilisi State University. He was broadcasting live coverage of a protest during which citizens were demonstrating against alleged electoral fraud and the perceived anti-Western trajectory of the Georgian Dream political party.

Sergi Baramidze was equipped with a so-called "live" broadcasting device secured to his back and a video camera mounted on his shoulder. Accordingly, it should have been reasonably apparent to law enforcement that he was a representative of the media. Baramidze was abruptly assaulted by masked individuals, who subjected him to both physical and verbal abuse. The entirety of the incident is documented in continuous video footage, which clearly demonstrates that the victim neither resisted arrest nor engaged in any verbal abuse toward the police.

The Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri, who himself appeared uncertain about the "propriety" of the cameraman's arrest, issued a statement regarding Baramidze's detention.

“As for the arrest of the cameraman, he was detained administratively, and the case is ongoing, it will proceed to court. It appears that his arrest may have been improper or accidental, but I can't provide you with answers, and I can't give you exact details.

There was a scuffle, the footage shows individuals striking police officers with a stick, and this person was present at the scene. I'm not saying that this person was the one wielding the stick - I'm not saying that. There were numerous individuals present, and I cannot definitively confirm whether the incident occurred as alleged. Let us await the outcome of the investigation being conducted by the State Inspector.

If any wrongdoing was committed, I will take full responsibility and address it with the utmost sincerity. However, let me state unequivocally that no harm will come to any police officer. I reiterate, if we are found at fault, we will accept accountability with dignity. No police officer will face punishment unless it is conclusively established that they have committed a crime," - Gomelauri stated.

As a result of the violent arrest, Sergi Baramidze sustained facial bruises and a fractured rib. Furthermore, his detention was accompanied by cynical and derogatory remarks from law enforcement officers, including statements such as, “Record it, you mother f\*\*\*,” among others. Additionally, the arrest caused damage to the “Main Channel” live broadcast equipment and video camera.



Following his arrest, Sergi Baramidze was transported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs Patrol Police Department building located on the Kakheti Highway. He was subsequently released upon providing a written commitment to appear in court. During his detention, no personal belongings were confiscated. After his release, Baramidze independently sought medical attention at a hospital for injuries, including a fractured rib and trauma to his eye. However, the government did not issue any response regarding his injuries or medical treatment.

Subsequently, the Special Investigation Service initiated an investigation into the incident under Article 333, Part 3, Subparagraph “b,” and Article 154 of the Criminal Code. These provisions pertain to the abuse of official authority involving violence and interference with journalistic activities. Furthermore, based on available information, the actions of the police officer, in addition to constituting abuse of authority, may be classified as degrading or inhuman treatment, which is a criminal offense under Article 144 of the Criminal Code.

Sergi Baramidze was questioned by the Special Investigation Service; however, he has not been granted victim status. The defense possesses video evidence documenting the violence and inhumane treatment he endured. Despite this, the state has neither identified the responsible police officers nor initiated any punitive measures against them.

Notably, on December 10, the 5th President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, honored Sergi Baramidze, along with other media representatives, with an award recognizing his exemplary civic dedication, exceptional sense of civic responsibility, and personal courage.