

Site Visit - Rustavi Women's Prison, Georgia

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Gypsy Guillén Kaiser
Chief Global Affairs Officer
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Remarks, as prepared for delivery.

Good morning, my name is Gypsy Guillén Kaiser and I represent the Committee to Protect Journalists, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working globally to defend press freedom.

I am here with my colleagues from IPI and RSF. Our three organizations are part of the Media Freedom Coalition and regularly advise governments on key press freedom cases and issues.

Today, I am here with my colleagues because behind me there is a woman whose liberty has been taken and whose health is at risk. Here, at the Rustavi Women's Penitentiary, in Facility Number 5, stands Mzia Amaglobeli, a fiercely independent journalist who founded Batumelebi and Netgazeti. For nearly 25 years, when Batumelebi was founded, Mzia's journalism has empowered the public and caused discomfort in some corners of power.

We are here today to let Mzia know that she is not alone. As she endures this unjust detention on trumped up charges that could leave her in prison

for up to 7 years, Mzia is losing her eyesight. What an outrageous injustice that this journalist, who has served as a beacon of light, should lose her eyesight while the police who perpetrated unconscionable violence against protesters face no consequences.

At CPJ, we know that Mzia is behind these walls in unwarranted pre-trial detention as a casualty in a struggle between the forces of truth and the forces of control. This struggle is a global one, and of increasing urgency at a time when information is manipulated and journalists who expose the truth are vilified as nefarious characters with malicious intent. Mzia Amaglobeli, in your darkest moment, we stand with you. We will not let go, until you are free.

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