

Former Defense Minister Juansher Burchuladze Sent to Pretrial Detention

By Liza Mchedlidze

Tbilisi City Court has ordered former Defense Minister Juansher Burchuladze into pretrial detention as prosecutors pursue charges of abuse of official authority and legalization of illegal income. Judge Eka Barbakadze announced the ruling after granting the prosecution's motion and rejecting the defense's request for bail.

According to the Prosecutor's Office, the case centers on events in 2023, when Burchuladze allegedly used his position to manipulate a procurement deal for the Defense Ministry. Prosecutors say that with the help of his deputy, a relative, and the ministry's former procurement chief, he arranged for the purchase of a medical device for GEL 3,940,000, far above the real price of GEL 2,606,272. The inflated contract allegedly caused property damage of GEL 1,333,728 to the ministry.

The investigation further alleges that in March 2025 Burchuladze and his wife purchased property in Spain for EUR 544,000 using funds of unlawful origin. To conceal the source of the money, they are accused of drafting a fictitious real estate purchase agreement in Tskneti with a third party, creating the appearance of a legitimate transaction. In total, prosecutors claim he laundered GEL 1,593,212.

Burchuladze faces charges



under Article 332, Part 2, and Article 194, Part 3, Subparagraph "c" of the Criminal Code, which relate to abuse of official

authority by a political officeholder and the legalization of illegal income. If convicted, he could face between nine and

twelve years in prison.

During the court hearing, the former minister strongly denied wrongdoing and criticized the

prosecution's case. "My detention is absurd. You want to put a father of eight with a brain concussion in prison?" he told the judge. He argued that the Spanish apartment was purchased legally with proceeds from the sale of his own and his mother's property. "As for the declaration, this house did not need to be declared. I bought it in 2025. I was not hiding it. During interrogation I myself brought the contract," he said. He also insisted there were "no witnesses at all, unless we count indirect witnesses."

Burchuladze said the charges were politically motivated and out of line with European standards. "If you allow me to assess the degree of the charge, there is no connection to European standards here. I want to show you how absurd my detention is," he told the court.

Defense lawyer Mariam Shatirishvili announced plans to appeal the ruling. "Our first plan is to appeal the preventive measure through the Court of Appeal. We believe the detention was imposed on the basis of a weak petition. We have a chance to achieve a different result and will file the appeal by Monday," she said.

Because of limited seating in the courtroom and high public interest, most journalists were barred from attending the hearing. Radio Free Europe reported the prosecutor's statement following the session.

Pre-Trial Detention Ordered for UNM's Levan Khabeishvili

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Tbilisi City Court, presided over by Judge Pikria Sikturashvili, has issued two rulings in connection with ongoing political and criminal proceedings involving opposition figures.

Levan Khabeishvili, Chair of the political council of the United National Movement (UNM), was placed in pre-trial detention on charges of bribery and incitement to overthrow the state government, prosecuted under Article 317 of the Criminal Code of Georgia.

During the hearing, Khabeishvili's defense team proposed alternatives to detention, including bail, electronic monitoring with a bracelet, house arrest, and restrictions on making public statements. These requests were rejected by the court.

Meanwhile, Murtaz Zodelava, an opposition politician arrested on charges of obstructing an investigation, was granted release on 25,000 GEL bail. He is ac-

cused of illegally interfering with a State Security Service investigator and attempting to conceal Khabeishvili's mobile phone, which was subject to a search warrant, thereby obstructing a full and objective investigation. Zodelava's defense had asked for his release without preventive measures, but the court declined.

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia also released a statement addressing public speculation regarding Khabeishvili's seized phone. Officials clarified that the device has not yet been examined and that no forensic inspection has been scheduled at this stage. The Office emphasized that comments made by the prosecutor about the general challenges of unlocking iPhone models were misinterpreted by media and social networks, leading to the spread of "false information" suggesting the device could not be opened. The statement underlined that such misrepresentation amounted to an effort to "spread disinformation



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