

Case of Anton Cechin

Name: Anton Chechin

Age: 26

Nationality: Russian

Legal Status: Political refugee; currently in pre-trial detention

Charges: Possession and storage of a large quantity of narcotic substances (Article 260, Part 6, Subparagraph "a" of the Criminal Code of Georgia)

Potential Sentence: Up to 20 years or life imprisonment

Anton Chechin, a 26-year-old Russian national and recognized political refugee, was arrested in Tbilisi on December 3, 2024, while en route to work. Chechin, who had been previously detained under administrative charges for participating in peaceful protests, is well-known for his involvement in anti-war demonstrations and support for Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Chechin's current detention raises serious concerns of political persecution. His defense argues that the case is fabricated in retaliation for his activism and that gross procedural violations undermine the legitimacy of the charges. Among the most alarming irregularities:

- No body worn camera footage was presented by the arresting officers.
- The search was conducted without a neutral witness, contrary to the standards established by the Constitutional Court of Georgia.
- The prosecution claims that a translator, Ms. Shorena Tabatadze, served as the neutral witness. However, her role as an interpreter disqualifies her from neutrality, as she is a participant in the investigative process.
- Testimonies by the lead investigator (Zurab Rusishvili) and translator-witness Tabatadze are nearly identical, with over 65% of the text repeated, including typographical errors - suggesting they were copy-pasted rather than independently recorded.

According to the case materials and as stated by the defense attorney in court:

"The substantive part of the interrogation record for Shorena Tabatadze, who acted both as interpreter and witness, consists of 40 lines, out of which 26 lines are completely identical to the interrogation record of Zurab Rusishvili, the investigator. In other words, 65% of the

information provided by the interpreter matches the investigator's statement—or vice versa.

The differences are superficial: for example, in Rusishvili's statement, the Georgian word for 'were' (ikvnen) is altered to 'ikavit' (the same meaning), and the phrase 'police officers' is omitted entirely.

Even technical and grammatical errors are repeated across both statements, clearly indicating copy-paste practices. These shared mistakes include writing 'motvivit' instead of 'motivit' (meaning 'with motive'), and 'moghebuli' instead of 'amoghebuli' (meaning 'seized' instead of 'extracted')."

This level of duplication - combined with the improper use of an interpreter as a supposed "neutral witness" - strongly suggests a fabricated evidentiary process and calls into question the independence, legality, and fairness of the investigation.

Furthermore, Ms. Tabatadze is affiliated with LLC "Intellectmarket", a company that has received over 1 million GEL from the Ministry of Internal Affairs since 2017 for interpretation services, raising legitimate concerns about conflict of interest and impartiality.

Despite the seriousness of the criminal charge, no neutral or material evidence has been presented to justify Anton Chechin's continued detention. The defense maintains that the case lacks credible grounds and is politically motivated.

In addition to these legal concerns, Chechin's health is at serious risk. Medical records reveal a cystic brain formation measuring 14/9/8 mm, which has increased in size since May 2024. A neurosurgical consultation has been officially recommended, yet the lack of timely medical access in detention further endangers his well-being.

Previously, Chechin was fined 2,200 GEL under Article 173 for allegedly insulting police officers during a peaceful protest on May 1, 2024, through non-verbal gestures. This prior administrative case - now being referenced to support his criminal profile - highlights a pattern of targeted policing of activists.

The arrest of a Russian political dissident under questionable charges reflects misuse of Georgia's legal system to silence dissenting voices. The lack of independent evidence, procedural irregularities, and reliance on testimonies from compromised sources point to a broader issue of impunity in law enforcement. This case exemplifies how Georgia's

administrative and criminal codes are used to intimidate protest participants and foreign nationals engaged in political expression.

Anton Chechin's case should be recognized as a potential case of politically motivated detention and procedural abuse, requiring close monitoring by international human rights mechanisms, diplomatic actors, and independent oversight institutions.