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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

November 17, 2009

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Mr. Zurab Adeishvili  
Minister of Justice  
30, Shota Rustaveli Ave.  
Tbilisi 0146  
Georgia

Dear Mr. Adeishvili:

I am writing in connection with the case of Maia Topuria who was tried with 12 other defendants on charges of trying to overthrow Georgia's government, was convicted and has been serving her sentence since 2007. Maia and her co-defendants have been in continuous custody since their arrest in September 2006. A single mother with three children, Maia is also being held in a prison criticized by international human rights organizations for its abysmal medical facilities--a serious concern since she has developed a medical condition which needs to be addressed in a clinically safe environment.

Experts in the American legal community in addition to human rights groups have said the trial was characterized by a well-documented list of due process and rule-of-law violations. As the entire trial was closed to the public, there was no media present to report on the proceedings and provide the transparency requisite to a fair trial.

The most recent U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) August Report on political prisoners in Georgia, and the Georgian Human Rights Report funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) all mention this case among other human rights concerns facing Georgia.

While Georgia may be moving in the direction of democracy and respect for human rights, there appear to be still many areas of civil society in Georgia that require immediate attention. Specifically the State Department's most recent Human Rights Report pointed to "intimidation of suspects, abuse of prisoners, poor conditions in prisons and pretrial detention facilities, police impunity, lack of access for average citizens to defense attorneys, reports of politically motivated detentions, lack of due process in some cases, and reports of government pressure on the judiciary," among other concerns.

Clearly, an independent judiciary that is transparent and open to public scrutiny is foundational for a fully functioning democracy. While some in Georgia claim that democracy takes time, the creation of an independent judiciary and release of political prisoners can be done quickly, if truly desired.

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The Topuria case should be viewed as a key test of the progress that Georgia is making toward reform of its judicial system. I urge your government to release all political prisoners and to work to ensure that Georgia moves toward a fair and independent judiciary.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

FRW:ea