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## **Georgia urged to implement ECHR ruling over murder case**

Georgian authorities must implement Tuesday's ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that Georgia failed to carry out an effective investigation into a high-profile murder case involving government officials, Amnesty International said today.

The Strasbourg court ordered the Georgian government to pay € 50,000 (\$74,000) to the parents of the victim. Sandro Girgvliani, 28, was kidnapped and beaten to death by interior ministry officers in January 2006, after he became involved in an argument with a group of high-ranking ministry officials in a Tbilisi café.

"The Georgian authorities must implement the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights without delay. Sandro Girgvliani's murder must, at last, be investigated thoroughly and impartially," said John Dalhuisen, Europe and Central Asia Programme Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

"The ruling is a timely reminder to the Georgian authorities of their obligation to end the impunity of public officials. Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concerns over Georgia's failure to bring law enforcement officials to justice."

"The Georgian authorities must carry out prompt, thorough and effective investigations into allegations of human rights violations and bring those responsible to justice in a court of law, whatever their position of power."

In Tuesday's ruling, the court found that the investigation into the death of Sandro Girgvliani lacked "independence, impartiality, objectivity and thoroughness".

The court criticized the Georgian government for showing unreasonable lenience toward the four perpetrators. It expressed particular concern over attempts by the Ministry of the Interior, the Prosecutor's Office, the domestic courts and the President of Georgia to prevent justice from being done in the Girgvliani case.

In July 2006, the Tbilisi City Court found four interior ministry officials guilty of killing Girgvliani. The men were sentenced to between seven and eight years in prison. All four were pardoned and released after serving just over three years of their sentences.

After details of Sandro Girgvliani's murder were exposed by a Georgian TV station, the case became a major political issue, with many both in Georgia and abroad calling for a full and transparent investigation. The conduct of the investigation and trial, however, led many to suspect a far-reaching cover-up designed to protect high ranking interior ministry officials. The suspicions contributed to the 2007 opposition protests in Tbilisi, resulting in a police crackdown that left hundreds injured.

Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concerns regarding the impunity of Georgia's law enforcement bodies and the failure of the state to bring to justice law enforcement officials.