

# C@ucAsia

**international coalition of gender journalists**

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collage by Vakhtang Varazi, Georgia

Nino SUKHIASHVILI  
Georgia

**criminal or victim?**

# SHE KILLED TO DEFEND HERSELF

but neither court, nor her family  
considered it important

*She is quite a well-known person in the town. A good-looking woman, working as a teacher. She is a good professional; her students like her, her colleagues honor and value her. She lives alone, unlike the majority of her coevals, who have already become grandmothers. People know that she is not married, has no kids, and lives in the house of her relative, who died not so long ago. She is an ordinary woman, but she never speaks about her past.*

She used to have love, family, husband and kids. But everything had changed in a moment, when she was imprisoned for 10 years and deprived of parental rights.

She used to love her husband. They studied together in institute, and were happy, despite the guy kept being too jealous without having any grounds for it. Love seemed to be the reason to her; and her mom, grandma, and friends shared her opinion. The guy was from a wealthy family, and she thought she was lucky to be his fiance.

"I used to really love him, but we did not know each other," she said. "All we did was dating, going to the movies and having a cup of coffee together. We were a traditional couple, and that was the case, when traditions are not good. If we'd know each other better, we probably would not get married. I think I loved my own dream about a happy and wealthy family life. I grew up without father, who died when I was little, and my mom used to repeat: "If only your dad would be alive!" For some reason, I used to believe that men can do everything, as they have all the power and justice of this world in their hands.

My marriage started with a conflict. My husband demanded from me to quit working, when I had just become a school teacher. Women were the majority of teachers, and I managed to persuade him, but eventually he became oversensitively jealous of the school principle. Many quarrels ended up with beating, but I did not want to inform my mom about it. I kept making up reasons to explain bruises on my face. I wanted my surrounding to believe that I was happy. But I felt terrible. My feeling was the mixture of humiliation, shame, defencelessness and anger. I really felt like revenging and defending my dignity. I did not know what to do and whom to address to. It was a vicious circle, and I could find no way out. We had kids. But the violence continued, and the periods of peace became more and more shorter. It was my birthday, and I made a cake to treat my colleagues at school. I was in the kitchen, when he entered it and began yelling at me,

## APROPOS IN KYRGYZSTAN

### THEY DO IT BECAUSE OF DESPAIR

A Bishkek resident woman told me about an episode of her life:

*"It is hard for me to think that I almost killed him. We lived together for 13 years, and our life was okay from the beginning. But then we faced financial problems and my life turned into hell. He began beating me. He kept hitting me in the head with all his might. It felt like dying, I kept feeling that he'd break my head once. I wanted to quit it somehow, but he kept beating me every time he wanted. Later he began beating the kids as well.*

*And once I lost all patience. You do lose your patience, when you get beaten every day. I took a knife and hit him in the stomach. I don't know, how could I do that, but I did. He survived, he had a cushy wound in the stomach. He did not even sue me. Now I understand women, who kill their husbands. They do it because of despair.*

Cases like this are not rare for our society. Some family dramas end up tragically for both a violator and his victim. But the motives behind crimes like that have not yet become the subject of special analysis, and materials are not being studied particularly in order to understand the reasons. We have just began discussing the problem of domestic violence and its victims, and these discussions have not yet been reflected on court practice.

*Nurzhan Tulegabylova,  
Bishkek*



*Not every woman will dare to sweep out a room. But she will probably lose her patience once.*

*photo by Nurzhan Tulegabylova*

## OPINION FROM AZERBAIJAN DOUBLE STANDARDS

Society does not evaluate adequately the crimes committed by women. Every crime causes protest and estrangement, but the society judges women way more strictly than men. There can be plenty of examples to illustrate this statement. Few years ago, an Azerbaijani woman killed her husband and burnt down his body. The motive behind the crime was domestic violence; the woman's husband constantly tortured her and her 16 years old daughter. The society did not want to understand the heart of the problem, and to find the motive that could explain (not justify) this action. Everyone felt indignation because of the fact that the crime was committed by a woman.

A couple of years ago we held a media monitoring aimed at investigating media's coverage of domestic violence problem. It was obvious that journalists are likely to share the details of women-committed crimes, but there were practically no efforts to unveil and understand the motives of crimes.

An average newspaper article can tell you a scary story about a woman who killed her husband. The story actually is about the mother of five children, who served her alcoholic husband for her entire life, and was the only person in the family who worked. The victim had never worked, he exploited his wife, the subject of domestic violence practiced daily. This is the information provided by the media. But the society seemed to have the only opinion: what a cruel woman! Nobody seemed to get interested in the woman's psychological state. And unfortunately none of women's organizations decided to protect the woman's rights.

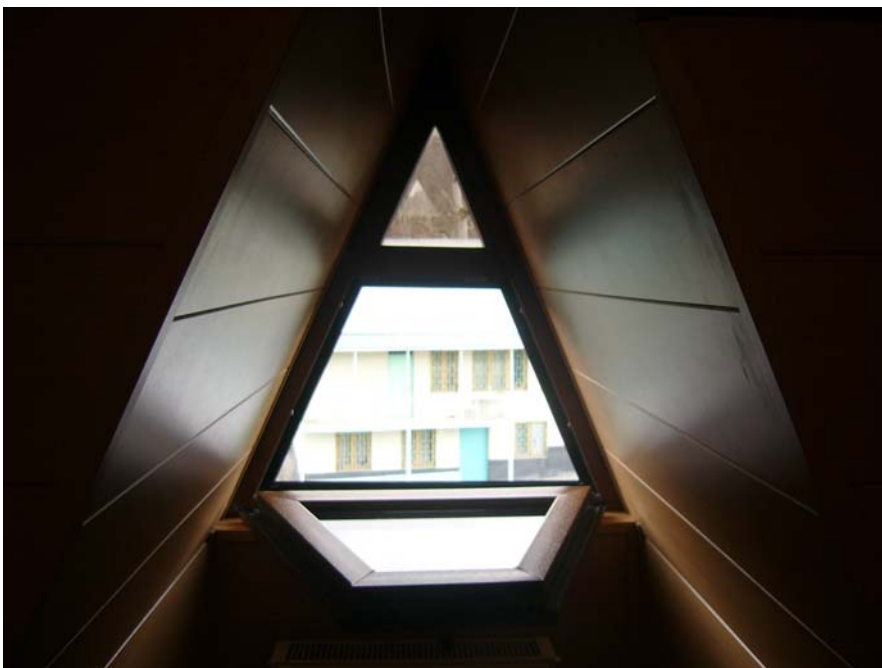
Our society tends to believe that if a situation like this occurs to a woman, she is an absolute criminal. But if something alike happens to a man, he is considered as a victim of circumstances.

*Vafa Saleh,  
Baku*

saying that I made the cake for my lover, the school principle I cheated with, as he believed. I said nothing, and he began beating me. I remember nothing after that... I guess I grabbed a knife.

We lived separately from my husband's parents, however, they knew about the problems we had. They never supported me, but turned out to be very firm, when demanding to deprive me of parental rights. The kids do not need a murderer mother, they said, and nobody had ever considered me as a victim. They raised my kids so that they now don't want to see me.

It turned out that it is possible to live this life in the way I live it now, having nothing, none, even without a dream. I would never believe something like this would ever happen to me. I spent several years in prison. There were other women charged for murder there. An absolute majority of these women killed violator husbands or partners, who tortured them for a long time. Violence gives rise to violence. This is the tragic truth of this life.



*It turned out that it is possible to live this life with the feeling of despair and humiliation, that changes to the feeling of permanent guilt.*

*photo by Polina Miloradovich*

! news of the month

# PARLIAMENT OF UKRAINE: gender misbalanced again



*...game for beginner politicians - build your own coalition.*

*photo by Volodimir Khanas*

The results of extraordinary parliamentary elections became known in Ukraine. Newly elected Supreme Rada is doomed to misbalance - it is obvious that gender misbalance will be reflected on its work. Preliminary estimates show that women's representation, which was low anyway, will be reduced even more. Women will obtain only 34 mandates out 450 in total (previously, the number was 38).

It is interesting that Yulia Tymoshenko's bloc gave only 12 seats to women (the total number of seats in the bloc's elections list made 156). It is significant that the second woman after Tymoshenko was the 30th on the list.

I made photo of quite interesting sample of pre-elections advertisement. Small towns residents had a chance to make photo with virtual leaders of Our Ukraine-People's Self-Defense bloc. But this right was granted only to those who wear men's suits.

*Vladimir Khanas,  
Ternopil, Ukraine*

## ! news of the month

### NOBEL COMMITTEE AWARDS

# SKEPTICISM, FIRE AND POWER

# OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

## Doris Lessing became Nobel Laureat

*Swedish Academy of Sciences named the Nobel Prize winner for 2007 in "Literature" nomination. The prestigious prize was awarded to Doris Lessing, English writer, who celebrated her 88th birthday on October 22.*

When awarding the prize to the feminist writer the Nobel committee noted that it pays tribute to "that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny." Only three women received this award throughout 15 years: Austrian Elfriede Jelinek in 2004, Polish Wislawa Szymborska in 1996, US Toni Morrison in 1993.

Doris Lessing is one of the best-known modern English-language writers. She was born in Persia (now Iran), grew up at a small farm in the British colony in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In her youth she joined communists, and when she was 30, she moved to England together with her 12-years-old son. Her first book, *The Grass is*



photo by Reuters

*Singing*, made the writer famous in the entire world, while her novel *The Golden Notebook* was defined as the classics of feminist literature. In one of her interviews, Lessing said: "feminism is one of the novel's sides; its main theme is the rights of personality in the society."

The writer currently lives in England and continues active work.

Margarita ARUTUNYAN  
Armenia

## female zone

# MORE AND MORE WOMEN IMPRISONED

## for trafficking and being souteneur

*There are 3462 prisoners in Armenia, 127 out of this number are women. The majority of them serve their sentence at Abovyan, the only women's jail of Armenia.*

Compared to regular men's prisons, Abovyan looks brighter: there are no gray uniforms and shaved heads there. The jail is located next door to the children's labor settlement; women and teenagers oftentimes work together. 127 court cases mean 127 hard fates and bitter emotions. Women feel insulted for court decisions, which they believe were unfair. They also feel desperate for their husbands who tend to forget their prisoner wives.

44 % of women are imprisoned for felonies, others were charged for economic crimes. The latter have worse feelings; they spend days analyzing disproportion of crime and punishment. There is the same punishment for two women, one of which misappropriated 5 thousand dollars, and another one killed her own baby.

Souteneurs and prostitutes are those who survive prison life better than others. From one hand, the terms of imprisonment are not as long as for others and are often amnestied; from the other hand, as they admit, their 'working conditions' are so hard, that prison does not feel like hell to them. Recently, the number of sentenced for prostitution and human trafficking

increased dramatically in Armenia. More than 40 trafficking related cases were instigated in 2006; in all cases women appear in the roles of both criminals and their victims.

Anush, one of prisoners charged in trafficking 'worked' along with her brother. She was in charge for recruiting young Uzbek girls, promising them good jobs in Armenian cafes, restaurants and striptease bars.

The case of another prisoner, Silva, is quite strange. Silva is charged for the assassination attempt on Armenian parliament member Melik Gasparyan. Silva, previously a teacher is the main suspect. According to official version, she ordered murder of the parliament member to a national security officer, who attached blasting assembly to the bottom of Gasparyan's car. Fortunately, the parliament member survived.

Silva has spent five years in the jail; the court has just begun and is likely to take a lot of time. She denies her implication to the assassination attempt, and says that she did not even know the blast victim any closely. The only connection between the victim and suspect is the construction company, which used to be headed by Silva's husband. Gasparyan was among the company's shareholders. By the time of assassination attempt, Silva divorced her husband. The prosecutor demanded 9 years of imprisonment for her.

Liana STEPANYAN  
Armenia

## psychiatry and statistics

# IMPRISONED WOMEN LOOSE NOT ONLY FREEDOM BUT ALSO FAMILIES

Specialists believe that women's criminality reflects the society's social-economic and moral-psychological levels. According to statistics, the percentage of mentally ill prisoners is higher among women.

According to court psychiatrists, women are determined to commit crimes more seldom, than men, only in cases when they drive themselves over the edge. An average woman is unlikely to kill her relatives, unknown people are generally

the victims. There are certain mental diseases that are typical for women only. Women's jealousy generally exceeds strength and passion of men's jealousy, and can be reflected in extremely cruel forms. A woman can be extremely cruel, when revenging her cheater or a rival. Women's crime may look amotivational, but in reality complex of impulses and subconscious reasons are behind her actions. Women conceal the feeling of resentment or



*they are those women can kill for; and they are those women long for in jail.*

*photo by Umida Akhmedova*



humiliation for years, and then undertake an aggressive action, which seems sudden.

Victim S. was getting drunk on the regular basis. He also beat his wife, but she had to put up with it. However, once after the beating he told his wife that he was the father of their neighbor's son. The woman lost all patience. She grabbed a heavy bucket and hit him in the head. The fatal blow killed the man. The court chose comparatively mild punishment measure to her.

## **APROPOS IN THE WORLD**

*The number of female criminals increases worldwide: throughout 10 years the index grew from 12 to 22 percent. Last year, women committed every tenth premeditated murder in the world. According to legal sources, presently there are more women who kill because of hooligan motives, the number of women who take part in bandit attacks has also increased. Statistics points out the increase of number of women accused for such 'male' crimes, as premeditated murder, mayhem and even complicity in rape. An average age of the world's sentenced women is a little older than 35.*

In our country, social-economic conditions influenced women and crimes they commit. The most part of crimes are of economic matter. Quite long terms of imprisonment are being sentenced, and the majority of women fail to keep their families. Many women prisoners state that they loose more than freedom and it is the biggest pain for them. They also claim that not only prisoners, but also their children get punished. International society judges about possibility to introduce such punishment that

would consider the interests of children as well. For example, English criminologists believe that imprisonment is incompatible with the mother's role and that restoration of family ties after release is a big problem. Not to mention irreplaceable moral damage of those children, whose mother gets imprisoned.

## **OPINION IN KAZAKHSTAN**

### **SELF-DEFENSE MURDER**

Plenty of different projects appeared in the troubled 1990es. Once I began working in the newspaper covering criminality. At that time I had no idea of gender issues topic, but started my journalism research with female criminality. I was focused on murders committed by women and later wrote an article entitle "Killing Women," which received a huge feedback.

I displayed statistics showing that women mostly commit crimes five or six times rarely than men. This data did not surprise anyone, but the information regarding qualification of women-committed crimes appeared quite unexpected. According to statistics, all women-committed murders were qualified as domestic crimes, meaning they were sudden and accidental. There were no cases when a woman would plan a crime. Each of murders were well-motivated, however - all women killed while defending themselves or their children from their drunk husbands, violators, or bandits. In the majority of cases, women called the police themselves after committing a crime.

Finally, the newspaper was shut down. Editor and executive secretary (both men, by the way) shared the small revenue newspaper gave and disappeared without paying to reporters.

*Alma Bekturganova-Andersen,  
Taraz*

Anna YUDKOVSKAYA  
Ukraine

**professional investigators?**

# TORTURES

IN THE COUNTRY OF DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY  
remain to be among main investigation methods,  
**only courts and prosecutors 'do not notice' it**

*Ukraine ratified European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which forbids tortures and inhuman or disparaging treatment. The country also ratified the UN Convention against tortures and other cruel, inhuman disparaging types of punishment. Thousands of researches were written about physical violence used against persons under investigation; this topic is included in every human rights report. But moral tortures implemented with the same purpose do not get appropriate attention.*

Women are more vulnerable to psychological violence; less cruel methods of inappropriate treatment can be enough to achieve a goal. Tough manners can be enough for a happy and self-confident woman to get scared and stressed out. The feeling of defenseless is oftentimes enough to persuade a woman of giving false evidence. As a rule, most persistent women get threatened with group rape, beating and other types of tortures. Even a very strong woman fails to endure threats in respect of her relatives.

A sister of my clients said that investigators were bringing her to the door of the room where her brother was tortured, so that she would hear his screams. She gave necessary false evidence in exchange of stop of her brother's tortures. The wife of another client of mine was told by police officers that her husband would be placed to the jail cell, where he'd be raped, in the case she refuses to give them necessary information. But women mothers are those who appear in the most vulnerable situation. Motherly love is being actively used as an ideal tool for oppressing a woman under investigation.

Threats to relatives' health and life can be evaluated as threatening, but stress and a mother's moral suffering are nothing else, but torture. My client T. Came to police station as a witness, but afterwards, as it happens quite frequently she turned into a suspect. During

her first interrogation (as a witness!) a police officer took her home keys and found out that the woman's 9 years old daughter was home alone. He gave the keys to his co-workers and stated they'd go to woman's house to rape the child. The woman received back the keys and called home only after confessing crime she did not commit (theft). Another woman told me that she signed interrogation report without reading it as soon as police officers told her that they know what school her son goes to and that they'd go there to pick him up. There are plenty of examples like this. Diversity and refinement of psychological violence types make you think about morale of people whose duty is to protect our rights. Violence against persons under investigation is absolutely inadmissible, while manipulating the feelings of mother, wife or sister is, at least, incredibly cruel. The worst is that alike actions are viewed as standing to reason and that they are the part of the law-enforcements' everyday work.



*You don't have to have knives and knuckleduster. You can scare a woman simply threatening her with violence against her child.*

photo by Polina Miloradovich

# **ATTENTION:** we're continuing the campaign

## **SOCIETY AND JOURNALISTS - FOR GENDER-BALANCED EUROPEAN COURT**

**C@ucAsia** magazine lobbies  
candidacy of its writer

**Dear Mister President  
of Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe!**

**Dear members  
of Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe!**

Ukrainian society is extremely worried about prevalent politicization of the society. We are especially worried about the politicization of the country's judicial authority. This tendency seriously undermines the trust towards court decisions, belief in the court's independence and fairness. As we see, this worry of ours is shared by the Parliamentary Assembly members.

At the same time, we would like to bring your attention to another important aspect -provision of equal rights of women and men while filling vacant positions. Soon, the process of filling the positions of judges will be completed at the European Court. We would like to note that the Ukrainian competition received 14 applications of candidates. 5 out of total applications were those of female candidates. As the result of the national competition, lawyer Anna Yudkovskaya was selected as a competition winner together with two other candidates. She brilliantly proved her knowledge of legal basis and practice of the European Court and scored 9 points out of 10 possible, which demonstrates high level of the candidate's compliance with the requirements of competition, held in accordance with the PACE Convention and Recommendations.

Anna Yudkovskaya is a well-known lawyer in Ukraine, who has a great experience in human rights field. During three recent years, she has been working as the European Human Rights Court lawyer. Experience of working in this body is extremely important for preserving

succession and avoiding excessive rotation of staff.

Besides this, we are sure that gender equality is an absolute democratic value for the Parliamentary Assembly, which considers the fact that presently, the number of female judges makes only 13 out of 45 in total. The words of Terry Davis, Secretary General of Council of Europe, were very important for the entire world's gender organizations and gender activists. At the 6th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men (Stockholm, June 8-9, 2006) Terry Davis emphasized on the importance of selecting women for vacant positions in conditions where female and male candidates have equal opportunities for being selected.

We hope that while voting for the European Court judges candidates you will consider not only PACE Recommendation 1413 (1999), but also our opinion, the voice of Ukrainian society and our colleagues in the region.

*Sincerely:*

*the list of persons signed the Appeal is available at the below link:*

<http://www.petition.org.ua/?action=view&id=4748>

**You can also follow  
the link  
in order to add  
your signature**

Diana PETRIASHVILI  
Georgia

## **priorities**

# MINISTERS AND CHILDREN

## both live in harmful criminal environment

*Georgian society has recently become alarmed and agitated by the charges against one of former state officials. Irakli Okruashvili, ex-defense minister and one of the most influential officials in the past, was charged for corruption deals. Georgian opposition, which used to be quite critical towards the former defense minister stood up for Okruashvili with enviable unanimity. Not all of the politicians declare the support openly, but this support represents an obvious background of numerous protest actions, high-flown statements and categorical demands.*

On the whole, the opposition's main claims are: Georgian authorities practice non-democratic methods of governing. They suppress freedom of speech. They subordinate the court to police. They grant police with too much of authority. There are also more particular demands: to remove the acting president and to change the form of government. The possible new forms discussed are parliamentary republic and constitutional monarchy.

The opposition's claims sound more than reasonable to ordinary Georgians. They are right, these opposition guys! That is not that kind of democracy we fought for, when magnificent revolutionist Mikheil Saakashvili came in power. And something definitely needs to be changed, but...

But no politician and no political party willing to play a fair game and building truly democratic society seems to appear on the scene. But the opposition kicks up a row. It gathers numerous street meetings to scream out high-flown words: "patriotism," "people's will," "freedom from tyranny"

Two leading TV channels compete in covering the political developments. The pro-governmental channel unsparingly shares the details of assumed crimes committed by Mr Okruashvili. While pro-oppositional channel draws the portrait of a political victim. We switch our TV sets from one channel to another and insensibly forget about everything except for 'the current events.'

I watched another news show, and opened my inbox. I kept thinking 'about politics,' when clicking on a short press-release entitled "Danger of Safe Schools."



*Ministers or children? An effective minister should act for the welfare of the children.*

*photo by Volodimir Khanas*

It turned out that the government does undertake some measures aimed at making high schools more secure. This is a huge problem for our society: the number of crimes committed by underage students increased dramatically. Last year there were dozens of alike crimes registered; some of them were committed directly in school buildings. And for some reason, this fact had never irritated the opposition, neither it made us, the society to go to the streets for a protest action. It may seem that we care about our children less, than about our former ministers.

The press-release was spread by Psychologists and Psychotherapists Association of Georgia, a non-governmental organization. The Association expressed its disagreement with certain paragraphs of the Students Behavior Code, the document newly created by the education ministry. In particular, the Association disagrees with the form of administrative punishment planned for the Code violators.

Could you guess what the punishment is about?

The violator students will be sentenced to reading in school libraries.

Which means that the Code authors support the school hooligans' opinion that reading is a pure torture.

Right now I feel that I am in an absolute minority: while the majority of my co-citizens judges the "destiny of its people" by attending Okruashvili-supporting street actions, I keep thinking about school-children. How should we find a wise person who'd stop new crimes, make schools safe and methods of achieving safety adequate, efficient and smart?

## **APROPOS from Georgia**

### **GANGSTER FASHION**

**what are teenagers' imitation models today?**

My son came home from school and shared news: one of his classmates was taken to the hospital.

"He was having a squabble with someone. Suddenly a car stopped in front of him, and three guys shoot him down with beebee gun," he sustained a pause and went on, "Me and Sergo want to have a gun like that."

We generally talk a lot and keep having arguments. My thirteen years old son believes I have no idea of this life:

"You don't even know the difference between "thieves" and "gangsters," East Side and West Side, Tupac and Biggy..."

I claim that a regular person does not have to know all this. But my son does not believe me. He keeps seeing criminal squabbles on TV, on the Internet, in the streets and he feasts his eyes upon gangster's romance of rap music. He is proud of being a friend of bad guys and says that for becoming an influential rap musician it is a good idea to have convictions in one's biography.

Before he turned 12 I hoped that my boy has too vivid imagination, but it turned out that he does not actually makes up the stories he brings home from school. And now I believe him, when he says that there are plenty of used syringes in school bathroom, and that smoking among his classmates, including girls, is as natural as it is at my office.

The first parent's meeting began with listening the Code of Behavior for school students. The Code is actually a list of repressions against schoolchildren. This document contains no single word on the responsibility of school and its administration. Neither it says anything about building the atmosphere of dialogue, not threats.

*Polina Miloradovich,  
Tbilisi*

## **APROPOS from Kyrgyzstan**

### **SCHOOL RACKET**

I am very worried about school racket and the level of conflicts within schools. In Kyrgyz schools, conflicts and abuse of new students develops violence and totalitarianism. As a consequence, children's spite towards everyone, including parents, increases. The next stage of alarming situation is serving in army. After the army, many young men turn into mentally ill people, instead of well-prepared defenders.

*Svetlana Bashtovenko,  
Balykchi, Kyrgyzstan*

Alina SHAPOVALOVA  
Turkmenisatn

## formal chance

# A M N E S T Y a s a r e s p i t e

it gives you a gulp of freedom, but does not change reality

*In October, Turkmen officials announced amnesty for 9 thousand prisoners. Local newspapers that published the names of pardoned appeared to be four times thicker than regularly. There were plenty of women's names on the list: Aijeren, Aknur, Guncha, Ivanna, Yelena, Maysa, Mayagozel, Zulkhumar... There are Turkmen, Uzbek, Ukrainian, Russian, Kazakh women.*

Marina turns over the newspaper pages, seeking for familiar names. She was pardoned last December and now impatiently waits for women she made friends with back in jail.

"Here!" she exclaims, "Myahri, Gulnara and Maralka! They will not leave me alone, one of them will definitely take me with her." Marina was 13, when her mother died. Her father lived separately from the family somewhere in Russia, her 17 years old brother was also living his own life. Marina had to go to her grandparents, desperate and broken-hearted after the death of their only daughter.

As long as she remembers herself, grandparents kept being discontented with her - they kept comparing her with her deceased mother.

In order not to hear lectures and reproaches, Marina did her best to spend at home as less time as possible. In the 9th grade, she met Alisher, an arrant hooligan.

"He taught me smoking, drinking vodka and having sex. Soon I got pregnant. I went to grandmas, she began crying and saying that I dishonor my mother's name. The possibility to keep the baby was never discussed and I had to make abortion. I was really in love with Alisher."



*I love my daughter more than anyone in this world.  
But she does not need a drug addict mother.*

*photo by Diana Petriashvili*

Today, at the age of 24, Marina recalls that period of her life and gets surprised with how much events there appeared in her life. As soon as she graduated from school, she moved to Ashgabat and worked as a waitress in summer cafes. But when summer was over, Marina appeared without money and without a place to live.

"Now I understand that God gave me a chance," Marina says, "I met Peter. He was a good man, he loved me, and his family was friendly and nice. I was glad to become the member of their family. And

all of us were so happy, when I had a daughter "

"Masha, my daughter was turning one, when I met Alisher. We just spoke to each other for a minute. Later, at home, I realized that I haven't forgotten him."

Marina did her best to convince herself of idea that there is nothing more important than her family, but soon Alisher met her again and asked to spend an evening together. Marina made up a reason to leave home and went to see him.

It turned out that Alisher had become a drug-addict. She now understands that what he did was making her drug-addict, but back then she thought all was a romantic foolhardiness.

Marina concealed everything from her husband and family and began constant trips to her hometown. She used to take her daughter with her, leaving her at grandma's and staying with Alisher all night long doing drugs. She got into debts, and began stealing money from her family. Everything became obvious, when Marina's mother-in-law found used syringe and caught Marina in the act.

"It already did not matter to me," Marina says, "I even felt better, as I did not have to hide from them anymore. Despite mother-in-law showed me the door, saying that I will not have a right to see my daughter anymore."

Alisher and his friends needed a lot of money, and they got involved in criminal deals, and had finally engaged Marina. Once, three of them were caught. Marina was sentenced to 9 years, her associates were condemned to 13 years.

"I stayed in prison for 14 months, and then was pardoned. I have been free for 9 months already. I got a lot of close friends in jail, I consider them as sisters."

Marina speaks a lot about the prison life. She says that her first impression was surprise about the number of Turkmen women who committed crime.

"I met there all kinds of women; teachers, doctors, sellers. There was a college professor, a ministry worker, and an actress... Some were sentenced for bribery, for money misappropriation, but the majority are imprisoned for drug dealing. As a rule, these women were engaged in it by men."

Marina thinks for a while, and goes on:

"Many women were pushed to commit crime because of poverty. When you have

to feed your kids, and have no income at all, you feel that this is the only solution. These women miss their kids a lot. But none of them said she would never do the same again! Because they realize that poverty might make them do it again."

Marina waits for her 'sisters' to come out from jail. Why?

"I need to live somehow. I can not go to Ashgabat, neither my grandparents want to see me at their house. I now stay at my brother's family, but I can't stay here for long time- two drug addicts in one family, it is too many! Myahri, Maral, Gulnara will not let me be alone, one of them will take me to live with them.

I ask her about her daughter.

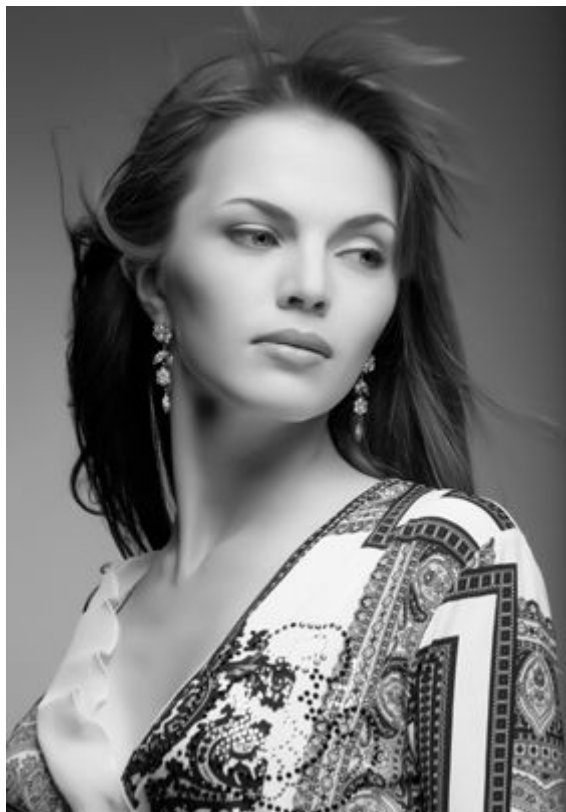
"I love her more than anyone in the world," she says, "but she doesn't need a drug-addict mother. My daughter has a good father and a great grandma, she will be fine.

Marina turns over newspaper pages, and keeps seeking for the familiar names...



*Once released, Myahri, Maral and Gulnara will figure out what to do and where to go.*

*photo by Diana Petriashvili*



Lali NIKOLAVA  
Georgia

**absurd**

# BEAUTY AS THE BEAST

yellow press presented Miss Georgia  
as a real monster

*instead of investigating details*

criminal, marriage swindler and gangster  
the girl is worth sympathy,  
but the scandal around her was up all summer

*In July, the resort town of Batumi hosted national beauty contest. The story about the contest winner turned out to be this summer's most scandalous news.*

As soon as Nino Likucheva, 18 years old student of Batumi University, was recognized as the country's first beauty, journalists began sniffing out secret details of the new celebrity's life. The first hidden fact was Nino's wedding photo. It was already a scandal, as the competition rules forbid participation of married or divorced candidates. The second detail was that journalists unveiled the beauty's previous convictions.

What charges were not brought against Likucheva by clever at punishment yellow press journalists! They dubbed her as a criminal and even a marriage swindler. The beauty patiently restrained herself from commenting, and the readership had to be satisfied with rumors until mid-September.

In the meantime, according to the contest rules, the main national beauty is supposed to represent its country at the Miss World international competition, scheduled to take place in November in China. As this circumstance obliges national contest organizers to settle Georgia's participation issue, Likucheva had to speak out. She told the media about her marriage, which lasted for exactly three days. She told the story on how she was

kidnapped for some Merab Abashidze. As many as 12 gentlemen participated in the kidnapping. Likucheva compared those three days to the hell. According to her, she agreed to the wedding ceremony because of fear, as she was threaten. However, few days later she managed to address to the court with her claim on kidnapping. In Nino's words, she later felt sorry for her offender, as he was a disabled person, and she changed her evidence. The court took Abashidze's side and future Miss Georgia was charged for false evidence and sentenced to two years of probation.

Image-Center, the Georgian beauty contest organizer was granted full freedom in defining the candidate to present Georgia at Miss World-2007. After studying the details of Likucheva's case, Image-Center director general Ia Kitsmarishvili stated that Nino is the victim of violence and that misunderstanding took place at the competition:

"Unfortunately, Miss Georgia-2007 had secret we knew nothing about. She was kidnapped at the age of 16 and was forced to marriage without her parents' consent. When she appealed against it to the court, she was arrested and sentenced to probation," Kitsmarishvili said.

"Our contest gave Nino a chance to forget her hard past, and I call on the media to stop attacking the girl, but to demand punishment for the violators."



After this statement, judges decided to solicit the court for pre-term release of Nino Likucheva. The court has allowed the appeal and now Nino has the right to participate in the international contest. But Image-Center has assumed that Likucheva might become the subject of malicious joy of competitor model agencies. This is the reason why Ia Kintsurashvili made a decision considered to be fair enough: Likucheva will bear the title of Miss Georgia and will keep all corresponding gifts; while Vice-Miss Georgia Tamuna Nemsitsveridze will be presenting Georgia at Miss World contest.

...Nino was asked what was the reason why she kept her story in secret from the organizers. She responded: "First of all, I would not be able to take part in the contest. But if I will keep being afraid and ashamed of what happened, I will never be able to achieve anything in the life. Besides this, o be honest, I was not thinking that I'd become a winner..."



*Courtesy of the beauty contest official website*

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Aziza M.  
Uzbekistan

## **feedback**

# I AM ALSO FROM TERMEZ

*Dear **C@ucAsia!** In your previous issue you published a story about my hometown, Termez. I have something to share with you, but please do not unveil my name*

*This border town is separated from Afghanistan by Amu Darya river. All cat-  
aclysms that take place in the neighboring country echo back in my hometown.  
This is how it was in 1979, when the USSR launched its 'military operation',  
and in 2001, after the terrorism acts in New York, when the campaign against  
Talibs began. For many Afghans Termez became the second motherland, which  
sheltered them in hard times. Many people settled here for long time, some of  
them started their own businesses. The town itself served as a buffer between  
the troublesome country and the remaining world. But what does it mean for  
the people to live in the town-buffer?*

The neighborhood of Afghan opium plantations could always been felt in Termez. Soon after the beginning of the anti-Talinban campaign, Termez turned into the trans-shipment point for drugs dealing. The number of drug-addicts increased as well as the number of HIV-infected.

For some town's residents drug trafficking became the main source of income. Women were also among those who got engaged in criminal business. Most often women were entrapped by Afghab drug dealers accidentally. Working as a maid at a wealthy Afghan's apartment was bringing some income. Generally Afghans gained women's confidence and promised good pay for a small 'service.' The service was about transporting several packages from one place to another. In pre-trial detention cell only women realized what did she carry. Everyday we'd find out about detention of new party of drugs at the border. The life was dangerous not only for those who got engaged in criminal business. I aftentimes recall a friend of mine, who died as the result of a strange accident. The more I think of her, the more I realize the level of danger we were imposed to. Olga was not among those who got engaged in drug dealing. She failed to enter university, and she decided to study with private tutors to pass exams next year. She needed money, and was she very glad

to start working as a secretary at a small company owned by her Afghan neighbor. Olga's salary was quite high; she could now pay for tutors, improve family budget, buy new cloths and makeup.

That evening Olga planned to spend with her family. But her Afghan boss called her and asked to take some documents that needed to be taken to the office the next morning. Olga agreed, and soon she was at the boss's apartment. The boss spoke about some money that should be brought by courier every minute. Someone knocked on the door. Three men rushed into the room. All spoke Afghan, but it was easy to understand that they demanded money. Suddenly, Olga's boss pushed her to the kitchen and locked the door. All she heard were loud screams.

Finally the boss opened the door and pointed knife to her throat... She was later found with seven knife wounds. The neighbors later told the investigation that they heard someone threatening others that the girls will be killed if the money is not paid. They also heard the reply: go ahead and kill her.

Police found the bodies of the girl and of the apartment owner. He betrayed her, but it did not help him.

Criminals disappeared. Three years of searching brought no result.



*At first sight, my town might look calm and sleepy, but it is a wrong impression.*

*photo by Umida Akhmedova*

Alena PANKRATOVA  
Russia

**foreshortened**

# EPISTOLARY GENRE RESERVE



*Women's attention can emboss and cable ordinary bars*

*photo by Polina Miloradovich*

*you get married, if you know how to write letters from jail*

Larisa and Natasha are friends; both are divorced and seek long-term relations. The women are in their thirties, they work as teachers. Once, they decided to post a dating ad in a newspaper, where they indicated their common post-office box they rented especially for this purpose.

The friends received two absolutely identical letters signed by the same person, some Sasha, a prisoner.

Sasha wrote his long letters with nice handwriting. Each included a touching and frank paragraph at the end: "I had never written these letters before. But I decided to take chance: maybe you are the one I was looking for during my entire life."

Presumably, Sasha wrote not only two letters, but much more. That should be the reason, why he did not notice that he was mailing some of them to the same address. Among dozens of letters Larisa and Natasha received, there were five sent from prisons. Hunting for hopeless women's hearts who failed to build families is very widespread in prisons. In prison slang this flirting is called "cotton rolling," which means doing anything to get date, when you are bored.

I spent four years working at police investigation department, and I have never met an accused, who would speak in nice and elegant manner. But when imprisoned, the same men seem to become masters of epistolary genre and great psychologists, who know how to win the favor of absolutely unknown women.

But it turned out that generally the letters are not written by senders.

I used to know an old lady, who kept sending parcels to her grandson. Her grandson Alesha was accused in manslaughter and sentenced to 8 years. When Alesha returned home, she invited me to come to see them.

That was when I had an interesting and frank conversation with Alesha. He said that was earning

cigarettes and tea by writing letters. He was copying the same letter for other prisoners, who were sending them to women like Natasha and Larisa. I read the sample, it was performed in great style, full of self-irony and respect towards possible recipient. The most surprising was that there were no grammar mistakes in the sample letter. Alesha said, he kept working at and developing the style and grammar until working out this very final version of the letter sent to thousands of women.

"The problem is," he said, "that the guys can not actually talk at their first dates. They had to remain witty and respectful, just like in their letters. I advised them to keep being silent, just as if they were too impressed with their date."

Maybe there are prisoners who do want to find their couple, but as a rule it is all about entertainment and getting profit. If you impress a woman, she begins visiting you and brings food and cigarettes. Besides this, marriages with prisoners happen quite frequently. For some reason, this is liked by prison administration: it is believed that a married prisoner is more likely to improve. I expressed my assumption about true feelings in the prison, but Alesha laughed cynically: "They have a right for long duration dates! They can spend three days with home food, woman's care and a TV-set in the corridor!"

Back in jail, Alexey also had a romantic adventure with a girl. But he failed to marry her: "She said I did not have to wait long for the release. She wanted to marry me after that." But after the release, Alesha simply went to his grandmas, without saying his new address to the girl.

But one year after that, Alexey was imprisoned again - he robbed someone and took away a mobile phone. His girlfriend was even lucky. As for Alesha's grandma, she died shortly before the court proceedings.

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