



GYLA responds to violent incidents in Kutaisi and Tianeti

GYLA responds to recent violent incidents in Kutaisi and Tianeti, as well as interference with journalistic reporting during the incident in Kutaisi, and urges election stakeholders to say no to violence. We believe that violent actions pose a threat to conduct of electoral processes in a peaceful and stable environment and are damaging to the electoral environment.

Physical confrontation in Kutaisi

Physical confrontation in Kutaisi occurred on September 29, 2018. Before the meeting of Kutaisi Municipality Sakrebulo began, Sakrebulo Member from the majority - Imeda

Saghinadze and another member of Sakrebulo from UNM – Gia Ukleba confronted each other. The confrontation began in the meeting hall of Sakrebulo and was followed by a physical clash in the hallway. Members of Sakrebulo from the Georgian Dream – Kakha Bochorishvili and Nikoloz Chechelashvili engaged in the fight and started hitting Gia Ukleba in the face. As a result of the physical confrontation, Sakrebulo Member from the UNM sustained facial injuries. The meeting of Sakrebulo was also attended by GYLA observer.

The alleged motive of the confrontation was Gia Ukleba – posts on social media and in particular, insulting statements about Salome Zurabishvili and her supporters. According to the UNM representatives, the confrontation had been stage and in reality, it was related to the statements made about Giorgi Chighvaria on September 28. As the meeting began, consideration of the matter took place amid verbal confrontations; some provocative [statements](#) were also made.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has launched investigation into the incident. The investigation has been launched under art.126 of the Criminal Code of Georgia ([violence](#)). According to reports, the crime may be connected to political affiliations of the Sakrebulo Member from the UNM party. Therefore, it is extremely important that the investigative authorities pay adequate attention to this fact. They should investigate all possible political motives of the incident and if these motives are confirmed, the case should be adequately qualified (for instance, it should be qualified under art.156 of the Criminal Code – persecution).

We must also note that according to [media reports](#), head of the office of economy of Kutaisi City Hall was covering the camera of Kutaisiposti with his hand, in an attempt to prevent reporters from recording the fight on September 29, 2018, while Sakrebulo Member from the Georgian Dream tried not to let reporters out from the meeting hall.

We believe that actions perpetrated against the reporter of Kutaisiposti contain elements of a crime. In particular, these actions possibly amount to interference with journalistic reporting provided in art.154 of the Criminal Code of Georgia – forcing a journalist to refrain from disseminating information.

Physical confrontation in Tianeti

According to [media reports](#), on September 15, 2018, a physical confrontation broke out in Tianeti, between supporters of the Georgian Dream and the UNM. According to these reports, the confrontation began [after](#) an employee of MP Zakaria Kutsnashvili's bureau, Roma Pashurishvili, tore off a campaign poster of Grigol Vashadze, presidential candidate of the united opposition.

GYLA observer contacted the parties to verify the report.

The UNM representatives stated that Pashurishvili tore off campaign posters of Grigol Vashadze and posted about it on Facebook. According to the UNM, this is not the first time Grigol Vashadze's posters were torn off and they will respond adequately to every act of interference with the candidate's campaign, including physically.

Investigation into the incident has been launched under art.156 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (persecution). Because of his confrontation with the Georgian Dream activist, UNM activist Davit Jimshitashvili has been [ordered to pay a bail](#) of GEL 3,000 by court.

In light of the above, we urge:

The law enforcement authorities:

- To act within the scope of the law and ensure timely, objective and comprehensive investigation of these facts.

The election stakeholders:

- To act responsibly and not to interfere with election campaigning by candidates, to refrain from violence and confrontation;
- Not to use City Hall/Sakrebulo for political retaliation and confrontation.

GYLA continues the pre-election monitoring and it will shortly provide public with additional information.

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION

