



## GYLA statement regarding violent incident in Akhaltsikhe

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association urges the investigating organs to investigate quickly, objectively and thoroughly the act of physical violence towards representative of United National Movement (UNM) and his family members in village Uraveli, Akhaltsikhe municipality on June 16, 2017 and investigate whether the mentioned violent act was on conducted political grounds.

According to the information, the mentioned crime may be related to political activities and political view of the victim. Therefore it is significant that prosecution and investigation organs pay proper attention to this circumstance on the initial stage, study alleged political grounds of the case and award proper qualification (referring to Article 53<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Code of Georgia) and if confirmed - consider this grounds as aggravating circumstance.

Any action that may be committed on political grounds, especially if the actions are violent and illegal, should be investigated in timely manner and

**Additionally, we urge political parties and their supporters to avoid violence and confrontation and also any actions that can encourage violence.**

According to media information, on July 16, 2017 coordinator of UNM Beglar Kapanadze and his family members were physically assaulted. According to the same information, proceedings were launched under Article 126 of Criminal Code of Georgia that envisages punishment for violence.<sup>[1]</sup> Victims were questioned during the investigation and expertize was also conducted, additional information regarding the investigation is yet unknown.

The victims accuse Georgian Dream supporters, former Deputy Mayor of Akhaltsikhe, Head of Bureau of Akhaltsikhe Majoritarian MP, Zaza Geladze and the Head of Cleaning Municipal Department, Giorgi Londaridze in the attack.

According to Beglar Kapanadze, prior to physical violence, the attackers reminded him of political past and work at National Movement. And afterwards physically abused him and even his father and children, who came out to help him. The victims stated that 9-12 persons were participating in the incident.

Representatives of the UNM consider that this fact represents political revenge and attempt to intimidate opposition supporters in the pre-election period. According to them Beglar Kapanadze is planned to be nominated by the party as candidate in Uraveli on local self-government elections of 2017, activists of Georgian Dream were informed on this and they attacked the candidate to intimidate him.<sup>[2]</sup>

Georgian Dream also responded on the mentioned fact and urged the law enforcing organs to react on the incident in timely manner.<sup>[3]</sup>

Representatives of GYLA met the victims on July 18. We also contacted persons allegedly involved in the incident – Zaza Geladze and Giorgi Londaridze, however they refused to talk with us.

GYLA continues to monitor 2017 local self-government election pre-election processes and will inform the society on revealed alleged violations and the response of the State on these violations.

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[1] <http://sknews.ge/index.php?newsid=13859>, <http://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/80544>

[2] <http://sknews.ge/index.php?newsid=13876>

[3] <http://sknews.ge/index.php?newsid=13872>