



## Statement about a violent incident in Akhaltsikhe

We the below signatories express our concern about the incident that occurred in Akhaltsikhe on October 27 and urge the investigating authorities to conduct a prompt, objective and impartial investigation and take all applicable legal measures. Reports about the Governor's possible involvement in the incident is especially alarming.

Any such violent incident during the pre-election period will have a negative impact on the election environment.

We urge political parties and their representatives to act very responsibly during the election period, to refrain from any confrontation and violence or from making statements that will incite any such actions.

According to media reports, on October 27, 2016, possible robbery and violence occurred and threats of violence were made during a pre-election canvassing or pre-election campaign event on Uraveli-Muskha Road. In particular, the UNM majoritarian candidate and activists were campaigning all day and meeting with local population. According to the UNM activist N.Kh., as they were driving to another campaign spot to

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meet with local population, they were followed by a white car. N.Kh. captured this on a video. Soon a car of Samkhtse-Javakheti Governor Akaki Machutadze caught up with N.Kh.'s car. A former head of the Improvements Service, Giorgi Baliashvili got out of the car, physically assaulted N.Kh. and took away his camera.

According to the UNM activist, later on his way back from the village, Governor and accompanying individual assaulted him verbally and physically on Uraeli Road.

According to media reports, Samtskhe-Javakheti Governor Akaki Machutadze denied the allegations, so did Giorgi Baliashvili.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has launched investigation under para.1 of Article 178 of the Criminal Code (robbery).

We believe that the Ministry of Internal Affairs should focus not only on explicit seizure of an object (a video camera) but also on possible violence and threats of violence; in particular, according to the injured party, the UNM majoritarian candidate was campaigning all day long and the UNM activists were subjected to violence in connection to the campaign events.

Alleged violence and threats of violence should be addressed. Actions described by the injured party and the information reported by media contains signs of a crime envisaged by Article 1621 of the Criminal Code: "beating and any other type of violence during pre-election canvassing or pre-election campaign event, which did not lead to a result foreseen by Article 120 of this Code, or a threat of violence."

In addition, according to N.Kh. his brother was dismissed from work during the same period, which he believes had to do with his political activities.

Persecution and dismissal from work on political grounds, interference with political (pre-election) activities and any such facts are unacceptable.

The above incident warrants a prompt and objective investigation, especially considering that the incident occurred a few days before the runoffs.

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