

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



GYLA's Statement on the Jury Trial

Georgia's first-ever jury trial was held on November 18, 2011. By a vote of 10 to 2, jurors found defendants guilty.

As reported by Rustavi 2 TV Company, on November 19, President of Georgia met with members of the victim's family and expressed his opinion about the trial. The president expressed his approval of the fact that jurors made a "rightful" decision, punished criminals and to a certain extent he also expressed his gratitude to jurors for delivering a verdict of guilty.

We believe that such statements send a bad message to citizens of Georgia (prospective jurors) telling them that a verdict of guilty is a "rightful" decision and

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therefore, it is something that future jurors should strive for.

We believe that such statements of the president constitute an attempt to exert influence on administration of justice, which is absolutely unacceptable. Every official or a representative of authorities must refrain from any actions/statements that may have a direct or indirect influence on administration of justice.

It is particularly acute with regard to jurors, as jury trial is a fledgling system in Georgia and Georgian society lack experience of serving as a juror. It means that every public statement and statements made by highest officials in particular affect formation of public position and approach to jurors.

It should also be considered that under Georgian law, it is potentially allowed to appeal verdict delivered by jurors for one time only. It means that deliberations may continue even after the court of first instance delivers its verdict. In such cases, public statements made by high officials may have a direct influence on outcomes of a given case, which we deem unacceptable.

We call on all officials to refrain from any statements or actions that may have any influence on administration of justice.