



## Cases of interference with election campaign and violence

The reporting period has also seen several cases of [interference](#) with the election campaign and [violence](#). GYLA has filed applications regarding these acts in the relevant agencies and, also, called upon political parties and their supporters to refrain from violent acts and to conduct the election campaign quietly and without violence, so that the events will not endanger free, competitive and fair electoral environment.

### Attempt to interfere with election campaign in Zugdidi

An incident took place on September 5 when Sanda Roelofs, a majoritarian candidate of the United National Movement, was meeting with constituents in the village of Jikhashkari, Zugdidi Municipality. Several individuals rushed noisily to the place where the meeting was taking place and tried to disrupt it.

According to Lela Keburia, a representative of the UNM, the persons who tried to disrupt the campaign meeting of the majoritarian candidate Sandra Roelofs are Beka Todua, an activist of Georgian Dream, and supporters of the party: Berdia Kukava (an employee of the Zugdidi Town Council), Tengo Abuladze, Giorgi Chitanava, Levan Davitaia, and Vazha Ghurtskaia.

In a conversation with a monitor of GYLA's Zugdidi Office, Lasha Gvasalia, head of the Georgian Dream's campaign headquarters in Zugdidi, explained that the persons who took part in the Jikhashkari incident were not members of the Georgian Dream party, though he didn't deny that they were the party's supporters. He categorically ruled out that Georgian Dream was connected with the incident that took place in the village of Jikhashkari.

### **Interference with dissemination of election materials and damaging them**

In the night hours of August 24 this year, an election banner of Giorgi Botkveli, a majoritarian candidate of the United National Movement, was **damaged** in the village of Shilda, Kvareli Municipality. The banner was fastened to a wall of a residential house of Meri Guliashvili, a coordinator of the UNM.

### **Batumi**

From about 10 P.M. on August 3, 2016, a group of citizens started to march around Batumi, appealing people to take part in a protest planned to be held near the office of the political association United National Movement. The main purpose of the appeal was to protest against government actions carried out when the UNM was in power. According to news reports of the following day, August 4, political association of citizens, Our Homeland, held a protest in Batumi. The protesters gathered on Europe Square and later, at about 1 P.M., shifted to the Batumi office of the United National Movement. The protesters demanded the prohibition of the UNM and punishment of its leaders. They voiced insulting comments about this political party and its supporters on several occasions. In their turn, supporters of the UNM who were near

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the party office also made insulting comments about the protesters. The protesters burned the effigies of Mikheil Saakashvili, a former president of Georgia, and Fethullah Gülen, a citizen of the Republic of Turkey. The verbal confrontation that started between the protesters and the UNM supporters soon grew into the protesters' attempts to get into a physical altercation, though law enforcement officers formed a barrier between the protesters and the UNM supporters and didn't let them get into a fight.

It is noteworthy that despite the fact that the protest had been announced in advance, only one crew of the police was on the ground at the beginning. The police presence increased only after the number of citizens rose considerably. The media reported that one member of the political association Our Homeland had been detained during the [incident](#) under Articles 166 (disorderly conduct) and 173 (non-compliance with a lawful order of a law enforcement officer) of the Code of Administrative Offences.

## **Telavi**

On August 4, at 12 P.M., People's Movement Socialist Georgia was planning to hold a constituent convention of its Kakheti regional organization in the town of Telavi. The convention participants were taking flags with communist totalitarian symbols to the event. Police officers who had been deployed on the ground didn't allow them to use the flags with communist symbols.

According to news reports, citizens supporting the political associations New Political Center – Girchi, the UNM, and Civil Platform – New Georgia held a protest near the building where the convention was planned to be held. According to Pirveli TV, members of Socialist Georgia made xenophobic statements, saying that “the country should be run by Georgians, not by Armenians and Jews”.

One of the participants of the convention, Temur Pipia, hit a protester, Roman Kevkhishvili, in the face, after which the protesters threw eggs at the members of Socialist Georgia. According to news reports, Temur Pipia was detained by the police. The investigation was launched under Article 125 of the Criminal Code (battery). The media reported that Mr. Pipia had been charged with battery.

## **Borjomi**

According to [news reports](#) of August 11, Giorgi Giuashvili, a member of the Labor

Party of Georgia, stated that a member of the Borjomi Town Council, Besik Popkhadze, together with other persons who accompanied him, had hindered him from campaigning and [abused](#) him verbally and physically.

In a conversation with a GYLA monitor, Giorgi Giuashvili also named the other persons in addition to Besik Popkhadze who had taken part in the altercation, noting that the said persons were employees of the Borjomi Town Council and of non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities of the Borjomi Municipality. He also emphasized that employees of the State Security Service were systematically keeping him under surveillance and eavesdropping on him.

### **Dedoplistskaro**

Late at night on August 11, at about 2 A.M., the windows of the Dedoplistskaro Office of the United National Movement and the election campaign banner of the UNM's majoritarian candidate, Levan Bezhashvili, were damaged. The incident was [reported](#) by the local media. The media also [reported](#) that the Dedoplistskaro District Division of the Kakheti Police Department had launched an investigation into the incident on the basis of Article 187 of the Criminal Code (damage or destruction of another person's property). Representatives of the UNM also named supposed participants in the attack.

### **Zugdidi**

On August 12, at about 10 A.M., employees of the Zugdidi Organization of the United National Movement found a door on the third floor broken, and a door on the second floor bore footprints. According to news reports, the investigation into this incident was launched under Article 187 of the Criminal Code.