



## Media Advocacy Coalition Responds to the Attack on Journalist Vakho Sanaia and His Family Members

On February 25, 2021, TV Formula journalist Vakho Sanaia and his family members were attacked by unknown individuals. According to the journalist: [REDACTED] were openly hostile towards me as a media representative, they recognized me and started provoking me. They started swearing at us, at TV Pirveli, they were aggressive towards the TVs in general. I think this is a reflection of the propaganda that is conducted against the critical TV channels, but it has already become physical and extended on us, on our family."

Coalition member organizations believe that the attack on journalist Vakho Sanaia and his family is a sad consequence of the ruling party's aggressive attitude towards critical media. We have repeatedly expressed our concern over the rhetoric of the

# საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



members of Georgian Dream, which creates a toxic environment in Georgia for the free work of media organizations and journalists. Our society is heavily polarized and the hate speech used by high-ranking officials against media and labeling of journalists as political opponents, encourage part of the society to verbally attack media representatives or obstruct their professional activities.

At the same time, crimes committed against journalists are largely unpunished. Even if investigations were launched, no one has been charged for physical attacks against journalists in the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections or directly on the Election Day. Impunity encourages violence as numerous cases of verbal threats have gone unanswered over the years.

∇ We call on the law enforcement agencies to react in a quick and timely manner to the attack on Vakho Sanaia and his family.

- We call on the ruling party to refrain from aggressive attitude towards the media.

∇ We call on international partners to pay special attention to the facts of verbal or physical attacks on the representatives of the Georgian media.