



NGOs voice their concern about various incidents taking place in different parts of Georgia

We voice our concern regarding several acts of aggression against representatives of an opposition political union that occurred in various parts of the country and urge all parties involved in the political process to reject violence.

According to media reports, on April 10, attempts to disrupt meetings organized by representatives of the United National Movement occurred in different places: Batumi, Anaklia, Telavi, Tskaltubo, and Tbilisi.

The incidents were accompanied by verbal and physical confrontation and throwing of eggs at the cars of opposition party members. Media reports say that Georgian Dream activists, who had gathered on the site, prevented United National Movement representatives from holding a scheduled meeting. A similar situation was reported on April 7 in Akhaltsikhe, where the United National Movement organized an interparty meeting.

The right to freedom of assembly and demonstration, guaranteed and protected by the Constitution, merits special emphasis during the election campaign. Enjoyment of this right, however, should take place within the constraints of the law and should not turn into violence. It is important for the government to ensure peaceful and free environment for holding pre-election meetings and activities as well as prevent violence and terminate instances of violence whenever they may occur.

The government should set holding local government elections in a violence-free and civilized environment as a priority. Therefore, each political party should be given the opportunity to freely communicate its own vision and platform to voters. In order to

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ensure this, we call on:

- **All citizens** - to reject violent protests. Even though we understand that those present at the rally might themselves have been victims of violence and injustice in the past, their violent acts, nevertheless, cannot be legally justified. Once such illegal acts are allowed, they will be repeated, which would undoubtedly harm the country's interests;
- **Political groups** - to establish discipline inside party ranks and not to allow their supporters to attend meetings organized by other political parties and make counter-campaign speeches. This will eliminate possibility of verbal or physical confrontation on political grounds and will ensure that all parties involved in the elections can meet with voters without hindrance;
- **Law enforcement agencies** - to ensure a peaceful and secure environment for holding pre-election meetings and activities, eliminate violence, and conduct comprehensive and impartial investigation of possible acts of violence; To this end, it is important that every violation receives proper legal assessment and adequate penalty;
- **Inter-agency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections** - to adhere to its previous practices and make appropriate recommendations calling on the parties involved in the elections to not deter political parties in conducting their election campaigns;
- **Central government and local authorities** - to maintain political neutrality and ensure non-use of administrative resources in favor of or against any candidate.

Transparency International Georgia
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