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გ ა ნ ც ხ ა დ ე ბ ა

**საია ეხმიანება წინასაარჩევნო პერიოდში
სავარაუდო ძალადობისა და კამპანიაში
ხელშეშლის ფაქტებს**

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**GYLA responds to alleged incidents of
violence and obstruction of
campaigning during the pre-election**

period

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) continues to monitor the electoral process. With the start of the pre-election period, incidents of violence, verbal confrontations, and obstruction of campaigning have increased.

GYLA identified violent acts with signs of criminal offenses in several regions. The facts processed by the organization include incidents of physical violence, damage to other people's property, campaign interference and other alleged crimes. In order to ensure a fair and free pre-election environment, it is crucial that political parties are able to meet with voters and carry out their activities in a peaceful and non-violent atmosphere, with a sense of physical security.

Within the framework of its monitoring, GYLA assessed 9 incidents. Among the identified cases, four involve alleged politically motivated physical violence, two concern suspected damage to property, and three relate to alleged interference in campaigning or activism. Of these cases, six targeted representatives of various opposition parties, two were directed against members of "Georgian Dream," and one involved the "Choose Europe" platform.

It is crucial to conduct timely and effective investigations into acts of violence that appear to be politically motivated. Prolonged investigations risk deteriorating the electoral environment, particularly in cases where allegations of physical violence involve law enforcement officials.

Conducting elections in a peaceful and safe environment should be a priority for the country. Therefore, we once again urge the relevant authorities to promptly investigate these cases and regularly update the public on the progress of the investigations. Additionally, political parties must refrain from mobilizing their supporters at opponents' campaign events, as this could escalate tensions and disrupt the electoral process.

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) has already submitted requests to the relevant authorities for information on all reported cases. However, to date, the majority of these inquiries remain unanswered.

Allegedly politically motivated violent incidents

Period: August 1, 2024 - September 25, 2024

1. **Attack on Nika Melia, co-chairman of the "Akhali" party**

On August 11, Nika Melia, the co-chairman of the "Akhali" party, was attacked. While responding to journalists' questions during the opening of the party's office in Samtredia, a young man struck him in the face and insulted him.[\[1\]](#) The incident was followed by noise.[\[2\]](#) According to media reports, the attacker is Saba Nikolaishvili, who, according to locals, is a supporter of the "Georgian Dream" party.[\[3\]](#) The investigation has been started on the basis of Article 126 of the Criminal Code, which refers to violence.[\[4\]](#)

On August 27, 2024, GYLA submitted a request to the Ministry of Internal Affairs seeking information on the progress of the investigation into this incident. In response, the agency stated that no specific individual has been identified thus far; however, the investigation is ongoing.[\[5\]](#)

According to GYLA, these cases may contain signs of politically motivated violence, which constitutes a criminal offense.

1. **Attack on Ana Tsitlidze, a member of the United National Movement**

According to Ana Tsitlidze, chairwoman of the Zugdidi organization of the "United National Movement," activists of the "Georgian Dream" were attacked during the election campaign in Zugdidi on September 19.[\[6\]](#) According to her, the violence escalated over several episodes, during which the MP was physically assaulted. Reports indicate that Beka Partsvania, a member of the party's youth wing who was accompanying them and participating in the campaign, also sustained injuries during

the incidents.[\[7\]](#)

The material distributed by the media shows how Ana Tsitlidze is being physically abused.[\[8\]](#) Also, footage of a physical confrontation can be seen.[\[9\]](#)

The Zugdidi delegate of "Georgian Dream" addressed the incidents by releasing a statement on social media,[\[10\]](#) followed by a briefing.[\[11\]](#) The Zugdidi delegate of "Georgian Dream" claimed that representatives of the "National Movement" initiated the conflict by first hurling verbal insults, which escalated to physical confrontations against internally displaced persons (IDPs) present at the event. [\[12\]](#)

As GYLA has learned, an investigation has been initiated based on Article 126 of the Criminal Code.[\[13\]](#)

4. Excessive use of authority by a police officer

On September 16, the party "United National Movement" stated that the police used force against a member of the party.[\[14\]](#) According to UNM, Zurab Abaev was severely beaten.[\[15\]](#) According to the lawyer and witnesses, the police first beat Abaev and then arrested him.[\[16\]](#) Later, due to his injuries, he was taken from the police station to the hospital [\[17\]](#) According to information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, law enforcement officers stopped the party member for verification purposes, during which Abaev reportedly resisted the police.[\[18\]](#) As a result, he was arrested for petty hooliganism and disobedience to the police.[\[19\]](#) On the contrary, the defender of the detainee's rights and eyewitnesses assert that he was physically assaulted by the police, claiming that the confrontation began when the officers took photos of the victim.[\[20\]](#) According to reports, the Form 100 prepared at the hospital indicates that the detainee has a concussion and also has lung injuries.[\[21\]](#) The victim's lawyer is urging the Special Investigation Service to take action.[\[22\]](#)

This action may contain signs of excessive use of authority by a police officer.[\[23\]](#) GYLA has contacted the relevant service to request information regarding the Special Investigation Service's response to the incident. The organization has not yet received a reply.

Obstruction of the electoral campaign and civic activism

1. Obstruction of the campaign activities of the "For Georgia" party

On August 3, 2024, the "For Georgia" party was holding a meeting with voters in the city of Batumi when a citizen verbally confronted the party leader, Giorgi Gakharia.^[24] According to reports, the individual was Manuchar Rizhvadze, an activist of the "Georgian Dream," an employee of the Adjara Environmental Protection Department, and a relative of Tornike Rizhvadze, the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.^[25] Despite the confrontation being solely verbal, a hostile environment was cultivated, hindering the meeting's ability to proceed freely. Reports indicate that individuals accompanying Manuchar Rizhvadze included employees from budgetary organizations and coordinators associated with the "Georgian Dream" party. ^[26] The individuals involved include: Nugzar Inaishvili - an employee of the greening service of the Batumi City Hall ("Dream" zone coordinator), Zurab Malazonia - an employee of the Batumi City Hall Gardens Association ("Dream" district coordinator), Gabi Kamaev - a specialist of the "Dream" faction of the Batumi City Council ("Dream" activist).^[27] Rizhvadze's companions contributed to a tense atmosphere by verbally confronting supporters of the "Gakharia for Georgia" party who were present at the event. ^[28]

1. Obstruction of the "Georgian Dream" electoral campaign.

On September 13, 2024, a representative of the UNM, Dito Kvantaliani, attended a meeting held as part of the electoral campaign of the "Georgian Dream" party in the so-called "Auto Factory Settlement" in Kutaisi.^[29] He protested the "Georgian Dream" propaganda, which led to a verbal dispute between him and the individuals present. According to his Facebook post, he was opposing the ruling party's "propaganda," resulting in a verbal argument with those at the scene.

The aforementioned incidents may constitute obstruction of the electoral campaign.

1. **Obstruction of civic activism for the platform "Choose Europe"**

Representatives of the platform "Choose Europe" held meetings in Rustavi on September 15.[30] They were resisted by the security of "Rustavi Mall", who did not give them the opportunity to meet the residents of the mall.[31] According to the security, the activists did not have the right to distribute brochures on private property.[32] Representatives of "Choose Europe" believe that the mall's territory is a public space and that they had the right to distribute brochures there.[33] The mall is a space used for commercial purposes, and entry does not require prior consent from its owner.[34]

According to media reports, following the incident, members of the platform moved to the central park of Rustavi, where they were confronted by representatives of the city council who verbally insulted them and did not allow them to meet with the residents. [35]

Violent restrictions on movement in public spaces, as well as significant interference with freedom of expression undermine the pre-election environment. It is crucial that public associations have the opportunity to express their views freely and without hindrance.

Allegedly politically motivated damage to someone else's property

1. **The representative of "National Movement", Beso Kartvelishvili's car was damaged**

On September 8, the car of ENM representative Beso Kartvelishvili was damaged.[36] The incident happened in Racha, Ambrolauri district.[37] The party suspects that representatives of the "Georgian Dream" damaged the vehicle.[38] According to the UNM representative, the police have initiated an investigation regarding this incident, and Beso Kartvelishvili has been recognized as the victim.[39]

1. **Damage to the car of the head of the "Georgian Dream" office**

On September 15, 2024, in the village of Lesichine, Chkhorotsku municipality, the car of Jumber Izoria, a member of the "Georgian Dream" party and head of the electoral office, was damaged.[40] He was in the village of Lesichine as part of pre-election meetings and did not witness the incident himself.[41] According to Izoria, an investigation has been initiated regarding the damage to the vehicle.[42]

Similar incidents, particularly during the pre-election period, negatively affect the electoral background. Specifically, they hinder the right of electoral entities to conduct their campaigns in an equal, free, and fair environment.

These incidents may constitute cases of damage to someone else's property for politically motivated reasons.

[1] "Nika Melia was attacked in Samtredia", information portal "Interpressnews", August 11, 2024, available at: <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/808788-samtrediashi-nika-melias-tavs-daesxnen>, updated: 14.08.24.

[2] Ibid.

[3] აქტიუ attack on Nika Melia in Samtredia is the act of the last regimes აქ Information portal "Radio Freedom", August 12, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/VVomp>, updated: 14.08.24.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Letter of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of September 18, 2024.

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[6] "According to Ana Tsitlidze, she has been attacked by "Georgian Dream" activists in Zugdidi", website of Radio Tavisupleba, September 19, 2024, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33126756.html>, updated: 23.09.2024.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] David Kodua's official Facebook page, September 19, 2024, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/GDDavitKodua/posts/pfbid0eEQUokj7qQHLKW6QHxmtz74SRkjKrb>, updated: 23.09.24.

[11] David Kodua's official Facebook page, September 20, 2024, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/GDDavitKodua/videos/1299078917724581>, updated: 23.09.24.

[12] Ibid.

[13] "They struck us first" □ UNM and 'Georgian Dream' accuse each other of violence," information portal "Radio Tavisupleba," September 20, 2024, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33127848.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawFji5JleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABH> o8ZCPyWqsSDycZg, updated: 27.09.24.

[14] "Members of the 'National Movement' say that the police used force against a member of their party," information portal "Radio Free Europe," September 16, 2024, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33121886.html>, updated: 18.09.24.

[15] According to the opposition, UNM member Zurab Abayev has been brutally beaten," information portal "On.ge," September 16, 2024, available at: <https://go-on.ge/3m5o>, updated: 18.09.24.

[16] "The case of the arrest of a member of the "Unity - National Movement", YouTube page of Formula TV, September 17, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1JEjKCwF1Y>, updated: 18.09.24.

[17] Ibid.

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[18] "According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Zurab Abayev, a member of the 'National Movement' and the head of the Nadzaladevi office, was stopped for verification, during which he resisted the police," information portal "Interpressnews," September 16, 2024, available at: <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/812352-shss-s-inpormaciit-nacionaluri-mozraobis-nazaladevis-shtabisa-da-aseve-komisiis-cevri-zurab-abaevi-gadamocmebis-miznit-sheacheres-ra-drosac-man-policielebs-cinaagmdegoba-gaucia>, updated: 18.09.24.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Why did the police use force against Zurab Abayev, and why were they in civilian clothes during the arrest? The police are unable to answer Khabeishvili's questions," Mtavari TV channel, September 16, 2024, available at: <https://mtavari.tv/news/165053-ratom-idzalada-politsiam-zurab-abaeve-ratom>, updated: 18.09.24.

[21] "The case of the arrest of a member of the "Unity - National Movement", YouTube page of Formula, September 17, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1JEjKCwF1Y>, updated: 18.09.24.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Article 333 of the Criminal Code of Georgia.

[24] "This is how the Georgian dream became like the National Movement", Official Facebook page of Giorgi Gakharia, August 3, 2024, available at: https://www.facebook.com/GakhariaGiorgi/videos/8181816031885970/?ref=embed_video&t=, updated: 14.08.24.

[25] "Natia Mezvrishvili - 'The Georgian Dream' has begun to realize the threats announced by the Speaker of Parliament on July 26 and obstruct the electoral campaign - it is distressing to see how 'Dream' uses the methods of the 'National Movement,'" information portal "Interpressnews," August 6, 2024, available at: <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/808262-natia-mezvrishvili-ocnebam-parlamentis-tavmjdomaris-mier-26-ivliss-daanonsebuli-mukaris-realizeba-da-saarchevno-kampaniis-xelsheshla-daicqo-mzime-sanaxavia-rogor-igenebs-ocneba-nacmozraobis-metodebs/>, updated: 15.08.24.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] "This is how the Georgian dream became like the National Movement", Official Facebook page of Giorgi Gakharia, August 3, 2024, available at: https://www.facebook.com/GakhariaGiorgi/videos/8181816031885970/?ref=embed_video&t=, updated: 14.08.24.

[29] "According to "Georgian Dream", Dimitri Kvantaliani, head of the "United National Movement" zone, tried to disrupt the meeting of the ruling party in Kutaisi, in the settlement of the auto factory", information portal "Interpress News", September 14, 2024, available at: <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/812103-kartuli-ocnebis-inpormacii-ertiani-nacionaluri-mozraobis-zonis-uprosi-dimitri-kvantaliani-kutaisshi-avtokarxnis-dasaxlebashimmartveli-partiis-shexvedris-chashlas-cdilobda/>, updated: 27.09.24.

[30] "Attack on Civic Activists - Public Officials Confront Members of 'Choose Europe'," September 16, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlxcmc-ilw>, updated: 17.09.24.

[31] Ibid.

[32] "Choose Europe" - this time the campaign continues in Rustavi. The aim of the campaign is to inform citizens about the European Union and Western values", September 16, 2024, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1091918275657019>, updated: 17.09.24.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Loladze, B., Pirtskhalaishvili, A., Basic Rights: Commentary, 2023, 331.

[35] Ibid.

[36] "Favlenishvili: Unity National Movement member's car was damaged in Ambrolauri", website of TV company Formula, September 8, 2024, available at: <https://formulanews.ge/News/116667>, updated: 11.09.24.

[37] "In Racha, the car of Beso Kartvelishvili, a member of 'Unity - National

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[38] "In Racha, a member of the UNM had their car damaged," information portal "newspost.ge," September 8, 2024, available at: <https://newposts.ge/news/politica/rachashi-enm-s-tsevrs-avtomobili-dauzianes>, updated: 11.09.24.

[39] Ibid.

[40] "According to the 'Georgian Dream,' in Chkhorotsku, a member of the 'Coalition for Change' shattered the car of the head of the local electoral office of 'Georgian Dream' with stones," information portal "Interpressnews," September 16, 2024, available at: <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/812310-kartuli-ocnebis-inpormacii-chxorocqushi-koalicia-cvlilebistvis-cevrma-kartuli-ocnebis-adgilobrivi-saarchevno-shtabis-xelmzgvanel-s-avtomankana-kvebit-daumtvria/>, updated: 23.09.2024.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.