



Statement of nongovernmental organizations on recent developments in the country

The organizations that have prepared and signed this statement would like to respond to the tense developments in the country. We believe that various groups have recently stepped up the activities that pose a threat to the pluralism in the media and political pluralism as well as to the public order. There is a real threat of further escalation of the situation and violent actions, so all political and civil groups need to treat the situation with a special sense of responsibility.

Attacks on the opposition United National Movement have been carried out in an organized manner over the last few days. A chronology and brief descriptions of the attacks are provided at the end of this statement. It has been reported that Georgian Dream activists, as well as heads of village administration and other representatives of local self-government bodies, were involved in the attacks that followed the protest rallies held outside the United National Movement's offices in the capital and almost every region. Aside from the party offices, the attacks also targeted the Saakashvili Presidential Library. The timing and the manner of the attacks suggest that they were organized and planned in advance. Also, attacks were previously carried out against the Constitutional Court judges, prompting the Constitutional Court chairman to address the Georgian president, the Prime Minister and the Parliament Chairman with an extremely alarming statement and ask for the illegal actions against the court and its judges to be investigated. In order to fully understand the situation, it is necessary to keep in mind recent public screening of torture videos and public calls for violence, which also constitute a crime.

Against the background of these developments, the Prime Minister made an even more alarming statement on 22 October which seemed an attempt to justify the violence targeting the opposition party. This kind of statement by a top political officials amounts to justifying and encouraging violence and could jeopardize law and order in the country.

Moreover, it has to be noted that the law enforcement bodies have failed to react and to fulfill their legal obligations in a uniform manner. The illegal actions against the Georgian Constitutional Court and individual judges are yet to be followed by appropriate legal reaction, while the reaction to multiple physical assaults on the United National Movement's parliamentary deputies has been minimal or absent altogether. Meanwhile, participants of a rally held in support of the Rustavi-2 TV station have been arrested, charged with a criminal offence and remanded in preliminary detention.

Violence and threat of violence is an offence in any case and the law enforcement authorities are required to respond to it adequately and effectively. But the response should not be selective. Double standarts are inadmissible for law enforcement bodies. This kind of behavior raises questions about the politicization of the system and it use for narrow partisan interests.

As for the participation of local government representatives in these actions, civil servants can be members of the political parties and can also express their political opinions publicly, but this expression must comply with the law on Civil Service of Georgia which states that civil service is nonpartisan and it should not be used for the benefit of a political party.

Considering the tense political processes, we believe that it is necessary for the authorities to immediately prevent violent actions, to refrain from aggressive rhetoric and public statements encouraging violence, and to provide a stable and calm conditions for all civil and political groups. The public rhetoric of politicians and heads of the law enforcement agencies should promote stability and a pluralistic environment where any instance of violence will be followed by appropriate reaction. It is also important for all political and civil organizations that influence public opinion and attitudes to realize their responsibility in this process.

Unfortunately, the recent developments point to a single plan that is clearly designed to reduce the diverse and critical public space, which is extremely alarming. This attitude creates the danger of civil confrontation and jeopardizes multiparty democracy. The authorities obviously carry the bulk of responsibility for this.

We call on the Georgian Government, Parliament, all political forces and the local government bodies to respect the law, act in accordance law and to do their best to preserve a stable and calm environment in the country, refraining from aggressive actions and rhetoric.

Chronology and description of attacks on the United National Movement's offices:

Samegrelo

Zugdidi

The Zugdidi office of UNM was attacked on October 22. According to local media unidentified people threw stones and paints at the office building and also broke the windows and left messages: "UNN Movement should be prohibited".

Poti

According to the information the Poti office of UNM office also became a target of the attack. Eggs and paints were thrown at the facade of Poti office.

The same kind of attacks took place in other small towns: Khobi, Abasha and Chkhorotsku.

Guria

Lanchkhuti

According to the information published by netgazeti.ge the front door of the UNM office was weld in Lanchkhuti. Demonstrators humiliated a Rustavi 2 journalist.

Ozurgeti

According to the information published by different media sources, the Guria office of the UNM was also attacked. The facade of the office was painted red by unidentified people who also left messages: "Hen" and "hen -coop"

Chokhatauri

The Chokhatauri office of the UNM office was also attacked and like other places the facade of the office building was painted in red.

Samtskhe Javakheti

Akhaltzikhe

Based on information by local media, Akhaltsikhe office of UNM was painted in red by unidentified people who also left drawings of the facade, which read: "Killers"

Aspindza

Local media reported the attack on UNM office in Aspindza. Like other places the office was painted in red color and the messages left at the door read: "Murderers", "Hen".

Adjara

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Batumi

Group of unidentified people painted the Batumi office of UNM in red on October 22. On October 20 the members of Civil Movement affiliated with Georgian Dream, “Tavisufali Taoba” attempted to invade the office of the UNM, but they were stopped by the police. During the demonstration Jemal Dumbadze, the head of “Tavisufali Taoba”, was arrested in the Adjara region.

Keda

The office of UNM was painted in red in Keda also, the members of Keda UNM office reported that raid was organized by direct order of Keda governor.

Shuakhevi

The target of raid become also office of Shuakevi. Group of people have painted office entrance in red.

Kvemo Kartli

Rustavi

Rustavi’s office of UNM also was attacked. In the same way unidentified persons throw stones and paints at the office facade and left humiliating messages.

Tetritskaro

Tetritskaro office also was attacked.

Other offices in Kvemo Kartli

The other offices of UNM become targets of attack

Sachkhere

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Kharagauli
Tskaltumo
Shida Kartli

Gori

Another attack was carried out on UNM Gori regional office. The façade of the building was painted in red, the windows were broken and the cars parked nearby the office were also damaged.

Imereti

Kutaisi

On October 22 the Kutaisi office of the UNM was painted in red. Certain people whose identities are not confirmed left engravings which read “Murderers” near the office.

The situation was noisy at the Kutaisi office of the UNM on October 19. According to local media outlets, the supporters of the ruling party brought brooms with them, blocked the office door and left messages which read “Liquidated”. The police arrested one of the participants of the protest who was later laid off after paying a fine of 50 laris.

Kakheti

Targets of reid become the offices of UNM in Telavi and Gurjaani. Same as in other regions also in this case unidentified persons throw stones and paint to the office and left abusing messages.

Transparency International Georgia

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)

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Georgian Young Lawyers Association

Open Society Georgia Foundation

Civil Development Agency

Economic Policy Research Center

Article 42 of the Constitution

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy

Georgian Reforms Association (GRASS)

Identoba

Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI)