

Georgian Journalist Aleksandre Lashkarava Dies after Being Severely Beaten during Tbilissi Pride

The Ministry of Internal Affairs remains committed to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia and International Treaties, as well as takes all measures to ensure that freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are exercised.

It is also noteworthy that the existence of pluralistic media in the country, represents one of the most significant achievements for Georgia, which is the cornerstone in building democracy and its protection is our main goal.

There are several aspects in relation to Pride Week in Tbilisi, that needs to be emphasized:

With the purpose of ensuring the safe environment during Tbilisi Pride Week, starting from the preparatory period, the Ministry of Internal Affairs held systematic meetings with the organizers of the event. The meetings aimed at planning preventive measures and eliminating possible violence acts against participants of the events scheduled within the Pride Week from the side of the opposing groups.

As a result of effective cooperation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs succeeded to ensure safety and security of the participants during the events of the 1st and 3rd July, which was positively assessed by the Tbilisi Pride organizers, as well as by different local and international organizations.

Concerning 5th July event, the Ministry of Internal Affairs repeatedly explained to the organizers that, considering the pre-announced rally of the opposing group, as well as past experiences and analysis of the existing circumstances, it would be highly risky and precarious to perform the final event, March of Dignity in the format of pacing on the Rustaveli Avenue in terms of protecting the safety of the participants.

To ensure more protection, the organizers of the Week were offered to consider alternative location and arrangement for performing the March, however, they were persistent in not considering changing the format of the event.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs provided maximum mobilization of police forces throughout the city to allow Pride participants to exercise their constitutional right to march, and simultaneously to ensure their safety.

The unfortunate developments of the 5th July in Tbilisi, raised questions and caused sincere concerns among our partners. Georgia has created a safe and free environment for the journalists' professional activities, as also pointed out in the Public Defender's latest report. The violent acts against media representatives on the 5th July were spontaneous with no reasonable precondition of possible massive attacks. The police forces mobilized on the ground, took all appropriate measures to respond to and prevent all violent attacks in a timely manner.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs immediately launched the investigations on the violent acts that occurred on the 5th July. As a result of investigative measures 6 people were arrested for committing criminal offence against the media operating group TV Pirveli, Miranda Baghaturia and Aleksandre Lashkarava.

As for the tragic death of Aleksandre Lashkarava, at this stage, based on the preliminary information gathered from the ongoing investigation, and based on the relevant forensic expertise, the high concentration of drugs has been found in the body of the deceased. The Ministry spares no efforts, to conduct the full investigation, to determine the objective truth, and to identify the concrete cause of his death based on the final report of the LEPL - Levan Samkharauli National Forensics Bureau.

27 people were arrested in total for the violence committed against media representatives on July 5th. Around 50 people were recognized as the victims and 42 out of them are media representatives.

Ministry actively continues the investigation process. Everyone, who performed violent acts and attacked media and peaceful citizens, will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.